

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end" —Karl Marx

Vol. 58 No. 1

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2013

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WORKSHOPTALKS

Patient, heal thyself!

by Htun Lin

Banks that were rescued because they were deemed "too big to fail" after they caused the 2008 economic collapse want to sue the government for trying to regulate their reckless behavior. The unspoken corporate motto where I work at the nation's largest Health Maintenance Organization is, "We're too big to care."

Our CEO had a hand in helping write the Affordable Care Act in Capitol Hill's backrooms. The victims of the HMO interests inscribed in this law have been, and will increasingly be, the patients who paid us to care for them, especially those patients who have paid into the Medicare system all their lives.

DENY CARE WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Obamacare may be able to prevent denial of insurance based on pre-existing conditions. But HMOs have been implementing with a vengeance the denial of care to those who already have insurance.

We are told over and over, at one staff meeting after another, that the HMO is facing decreased federal reimbursement from Medicare as the full launch date of Obamacare in 2014 is looming. The HMO's mantra is that bottom-line finances demand that operations have to become more "efficient." That is code for cutting care-staff and further speedup.

The truth is that 30 million working adults who have no coverage will soon be mandated to have health insurance, which will mean more revenue. Just as we

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EDITORIAL Undoing Michigan election

With lightning swiftness a super-majority of Michigan lame-duck Republicans passed a series of oppressive bills at the end of December. Defying voters' expressed views, they passed an anti-union "right-to-work" law, an anti-abortion bill and a dictatorial emergency manager act. This was accomplished despite a record number—over 12,500—of protestors who stormed and occupied the legislative chamber and rallied around the Capitol building for two days prior to the vote. These laws, while immediately impacting those who live in Michigan, offer a template to other reactionaries and must be exposed and fiercely opposed.

Michiganders watched in disbelief. This is Michigan, home of the powerful United Auto Workers (UAW) union which saw its birth in the sit-down strikes of the 1930s. Back then, UAW leadership was eager to challenge corporations and represent the aspirations of the rank-and-file workers in battles that raised the living standards of everyone.

ATTACK ON UNIONS IN A UNION STATE

But that was then, this is now. Now the UAW leadership has capitulated to the corporate mentality, which has become increasingly anti-union and anti-labor. The effort to oppose the right-to-work legislation didn't have as much support as it would have, had the unions maintained their pro-labor stance. So-called "right to work" makes it illegal to require a worker to financially support a union as a condition of employment. It's a legislative way to destroy unions and thus collective bargaining.

While in 2011 Michigan Governor Rick Snyder,

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Uprisings in Egypt and Syria confront counter-revolution

by Gerry Emmett

"However partial the industrial revolt may be, it conceals within itself a universal soul: political revolt may be never so universal but it hides a narrow-minded spirit under the most colossal form."

—Karl Marx, "On the King of Prussia and Social Reform"

The world's rulers would like to declare an end to the earth-shaking, world-historic events of the Arab Spring, that completely unforeseen social revolt that began in Tunisia in December 2010 and spread to Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and around the world. The seemingly limitless desire for a different kind of society that burned in the revolutionary hearts and minds of those who occupied Tahrir Square inspired countless millions from Madison, Wisconsin, to Barcelona, Spain, and struck terror in the rulers.

Slightly over two years since the beginning of Egypt's revolution, those heady days can seem distant. The current government of Mohamed Morsi, of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, was able to push through a reactionary Constitution following a 32% turnout of voters. It includes anti-working class Articles allowing for child labor and forced labor, in certain circumstances; limits the right to form unions; and ties wages to production. It describes women's role as one of "caregiver" and includes no guarantees of women's equality—a lived reality during the occupation of Tahrir Square.

CONSTITUTION = COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The Constitution's vague reliance on Sharia law opens many other areas for reaction to colonize everyday life in Egypt. Indeed, there are very real echoes of Khomeini's Iranian counter-revolution in today's Egypt.

tian developments. Since December, protesters camped out around the Presidential palace have been attacked by Morsi-supporting thugs, with some being killed. The government has attempted to prosecute those like TV commentator Bassem Youssef, who satirizes Islamists, saying, "Don't be surprised if you see the people who are supposed to be the religious ones cursing and bullying people. They look at us not as Muslims and Christians, no. As infidels, hypocrites, enemies of religion, enemies of the lord. So, we deserve to be cursed and humiliated, even if it goes as far as beating and torture and maybe after that, God forbid, killing."

Youssef's popularity shows that Morsi's supporters have nothing positive to say to the Egyptian masses, especially to workers, women, youth and others who made the revolution. Morsi's gutter anti-Semitism is the measure of him. Such a narrow-minded spirit would be laughable if it didn't wield state power.

As the Arab Spring unfolded, the world's state-capitalist rulers placed a priority on limiting the revolution. The strategy they hit upon—improvised as it was—involved narrowing the revolution into electoral channels. The model that presented itself was Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party, with its commitment to "free market" principles coupled with religious ideology.

CAPITALISM'S PERVERSE 'DEMOCRACY'

"Religion" was a necessary cover to roll back the new human relations, such as those between men and women as equals, that existed in Tahrir Square. By no accident whatsoever, the counter-revolution from within the revolution first expressed itself through assaults on women, including on International Women's Day demonstrators in March 2011.

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Protesters marching into Korba, Heliopolis, Egypt, besieging the presidential palace, Dec. 4, 2012, in opposition to the Constitutional referendum.

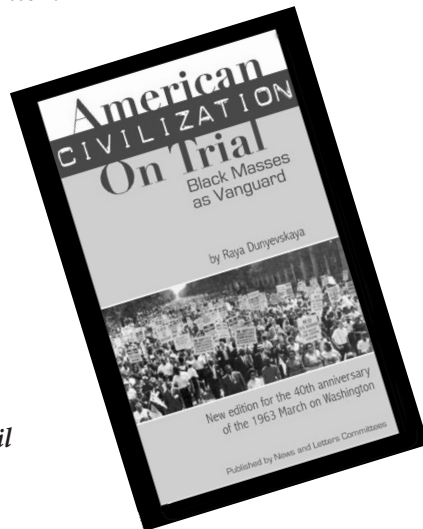
On the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation:

American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard

by Raya Dunayevskaya

On the 50th Anniversary of its publication, *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard* remains as relevant today as when it was written.

- *Discover a different view of Lincoln than presented in the movie Lincoln.*
- *Learn about Karl Marx's American roots and the great importance he put on the Civil War in the U.S.*
- *Trace the Black struggle for freedom from the first enslavement of Africans in North America, through slave revolts and Civil War, to the great Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, to the challenges faced by the movement today.*



See page 4 for Dunayevskaya's 1963 view of the publication of *American Civilization on Trial*.

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WOMAN AS REASON

Rape protests in India

by Terry Moon

The recent rape of a 23-year-old medical student in India was brutal: a metal rod was jammed with such force into her vagina that it reached into her diaphragm, destroying her intestines and ultimately killing her. It happened in Delhi, and demonstrations—first against the rape and then against a government that proved itself incapable of comprehending the tragedy or what to do about it—have been ceaseless.

It does not take away from the inhuman nature of this rape to point out that similar rapes have been happening on a massive scale in Congo for over five years, rapes every bit as brutal and deadly to *thousands* of women. (See *N&L* Nov.-Dec. 2010 "Congo, capitalism and rape," and Feb.- March 2008 "Congo: women's obliteration.")

What is new, then, is the outcry.

Some speculate this is because this young Indian woman was the "perfect victim." She was doing something completely normal—coming home from a movie, accompanied by a man; she was a medical student. Her rape showed it could happen to anyone.

THE INHUMANNESS OF RAPE IS WORLDWIDE

But that alone doesn't explain the sustained, angry and militant outcry, one that is supported by women worldwide and recently spread to nearby Nepal. Rather, at least three developments are also involved in what appears to be a deep, militant, spontaneous response.

First is the initial reaction of the Indian state, which acted as if the demonstrations that sprang up in support of the rape victim—and in condemnation of her attackers and the lack of political will to end widespread rape and street harassment—were a direct attack on the state. Rather than meet with demonstrators, listen to demands, show sympathy—any kind of decent human response—the state attacked them.

Police beat demonstrators viciously, battered them with water cannons, arrested them, and cut off access to demonstration sites. So fearful were they of the demonstrations that they sent the victim to a hospital in Singapore so that when she died—which doctors knew was inevitable—she would die outside the country. Even now, after weeks of protests, they refuse to actually listen to what women are saying needs to be done.

Second is the international nature of the struggle against what is now widely being called "rape culture." That is what the Slutwalks are all about that started in Canada and spread across the globe. Worldwide, wom-

Jayne Cortez, poet

The late Jayne Cortez was a major figure of the Black Arts Movement. She was a poet, musician and creative force unto herself. Born in Arizona, she was raised in Los Angeles' Watts district. She married the great saxophonist Ornette Coleman in 1954.

Her work held "Free" at its center, its heart, as the great generation of artists and musicians she was a part of—Coleman, Charles Mingus, John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy and the rest. Contemporaries of Fanon and Malcolm X, they developed Free as new forms of perception and expression. Her art related equally to Langston Hughes and Captain Beefheart, Chano Pozo and Audre Lorde. Where the demotic becomes the truly democratic.

Jayne Cortez' vision was revolutionary in the best sense, all about self-determination; her words delivered with a fire that seldom lost contact with humor and compassion. Her work stayed rooted in the common life of her people, as it asserted the absolute right of everyone to self-determination as plain common sense. She said, "Being unemployed and without food can make you very sad. But you weren't the problem. The problem existed before you knew there was a problem. The problem is the system, and you can organize, unify, and do something about the system."

As she wrote in her poem, "I'm a Worker":

*I got the landlord gas lights
the union telephone department store
subways buses & 4 human beings
to feed
so tell me tell me tell me
do you think a revolution is what I need*

Cortez published many books, recorded some great music with her group The Firespitters, which included son Denardo Coleman, and won numerous literary awards. With Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo she founded the Organization of Women Writers of Africa. She is survived by her son and her husband, artist Melvin Edwards.

—Tim Finnigan



One of the many thousands protesting the brutal rape in India. This demonstration was Jan. 3 at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi.

en are making it clear that when a woman is raped, the rapist is at fault, period. No longer is it acceptable—it never should have been—to say that it was because of her clothes, or she was drunk, or she shouldn't have been alone, or out at night, etc., etc., *ad nauseam*. Women rightly see these as excuses for the rapist, as a dehumanization of women and an attack on our freedom.

ARAB SPRING REVEALS THE POSSIBLE

Third, and most importantly, is that the Arab Spring happened and showed what is possible and worth fighting for. Egypt is known for its harassment of women and yet what happened in the struggle to bring down Mubarak was more than the creation of a real democracy in Tahrir Square. In the Square, for the first time in their lives, women could participate openly and together with men in the transformation of their country and their lives. For the first time women were not dehumanized, but seen as comrades in the struggle. Salma El Tarzi, a 33-year-old filmmaker, put it this way:

"I was one of many women, young and old, there....Something changed in the dynamic between men and women in Tahrir. When the men saw that women were fighting in the front line, that changed their perception of us and we were all united. We were all Egyptians now. The general view of women changed for many. Not a single case of sexual harassment happened during the protests up until the last day when Mubarak stepped down. That is a big change for Egypt."

THE WHOLE SOCIETY MUST CHANGE

There is no doubt that the demonstrations in India are for justice for the woman who was so horribly raped, maimed and murdered. Furthermore, feminist organizations and many demonstrators include a condemnation of the Indian army's use of rape as a weapon of war in Kashmir and other places. They are demanding that their government listen to what women are saying is necessary: a total transformation of relations between men and women.

What Arab Spring has made clear is how that demand is a demand for revolution—one so deep and total that all human relationships are transformed. What Arab Spring has also made clear, once again, is how fleeting victories won by women in the heat of battle can be. That is why we have to work out how the revolution can become permanent. At this moment, our solidarity is with the demonstrators in India as the struggle there—and worldwide—continues.

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

On Jan. 2, Gerda Lerner, a founding member of the National Organization for Women and history professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, died at the age of 92. She founded the first national graduate program in women's history and a women's studies program at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, N.Y. She wrote *The Creation of Patriarchy* in 1986 and *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* in 1996. She edited *Black Women in White America*, one of the first books to document the struggles and contributions of Black women in U.S. history. She said imprisonment by the Nazis at age 18 taught her how society can manipulate people and allowed her to resist the notion that women had no significant history.

* * *

Fifty U.S. LGBT, Queer, Two Spirited, and allied organizations observed Dec. 17, the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers, signing a statement of support of worldwide efforts to defend the lives and rights of all people involved in the sex trade. Even for *perceived* involvement in the sex trades, many are targeted for violence. The groups, including the ACLU, Lambda Legal, the Audre Lorde Project, FIERCE, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and the National Black Justice Coalition, recognized that sex workers have been at the forefront of movements for LGBTQ freedom worldwide and must play a leadership role in informing our response to violence against sex workers.

* * *

Amnesty International has demanded the release of 11 women detained in the town of Buraida by Saudi Arabian authorities unless they are charged with an internationally recognizable crime. They were arrested on Jan. 5 for "infringing the system" when 18 women and 10 children gathered outside Buraida's Board of Grievances to protest the continued detention of relatives in connection with Saudi anti-terrorism efforts.

Nursing home greed

kills children

For 14 years, Doris Freyre cared for her profoundly disabled daughter in their Tampa, Fla., home. Marie was fed through a feeding tube, and Doris pureed fresh fruits and vegetables for her and made sure her other needs were met. She surrounded Marie with family photos and pictures of angels.

Despite this excellent and loving care, Marie Freyre died at a \$506-per-day nursing home—sobbing, shaking and screaming for her real home.

Marie was born with cerebral palsy, hydrocephalus (fluid on the brain) and a seizure disorder. She had many of the same difficulties as my own daughter. Setbacks in her health brought her to Tampa General Hospital, where a Hillsborough County judge was asked by social workers to determine custody of Marie. He ordered her returned to her mother.

HOSPITAL EVICTS CHILD TO SAVE MONEY

A month later, in violation of the judge's order and against her mother's wishes, the hospital put Marie in an ambulance for the five-hour trip to the Miami Gardens nursing home. Social workers insisted that the Miami Gardens home was the safest place for Marie. Family members pleaded with the hospital staff not to take her. "When they took Marie out of my arms, it destroyed everyone in the family," said Ms. Freyre.

At 5:30 PM Marie arrived at Florida Club Care Center on a stretcher, screaming. Two hours later she was still screaming. At 5:40 AM notations say Marie's breathing was labored and she was "warm to the touch." Nobody bothered to contact a doctor. A short time later, Marie was "unresponsive." She was transported to the hospital and died of a heart attack there at 6:54 AM.

Marie's condition was not assessed by nurses until three hours after she arrived, and the nursing home never told a doctor that she was struggling to breathe. She did not receive all her life-saving anti-seizure drugs the day before she died. When questioned, the home's administrator took no responsibility for Marie's death. "She did not expire in the facility," he said. "She expired in the hospital."

CHILDREN MORE PROFITABLE THAN ELDERLY

Federal civil rights lawyers have accused the State of Florida of warehousing sick and disabled children as virtual potted plants. The real reason why this warehousing occurs has nothing to do with the well-being of children. Florida healthcare administrators pay nursing homes about \$213 per day to care for a frail elder; but the state will reimburse homes more than \$506 per day to care for a "sick" or disabled child! State policies and practices favor institutional care at the expense of community-based services and the health and well-being of the "patient."

Both nursing home industry groups and the Agency for Health Care Administration, which regulates the industry, defended the practice, saying that some children are too frail or too disabled to live at home. Who are they to make those kinds of decisions about the lives of these children? Or anyone else?

One Orlando nursing home's failure to protect a severely disabled child led to life-threatening respiratory distress. The child was blind, intellectually disabled, couldn't speak or eat and breathed with the aid of a tube. Diagnosed with double pneumonia, that child had foreign objects lodged in his or her lungs and a temperature of 103 degrees. At a nearby hospital, the child had to be resuscitated more than once, and doctors found parts of a diaper in her or his throat, as well as a Christmas tree light in the child's lungs. What happened to the nursing home that nearly killed this child and violated his or her rights? They had to pay a \$3,750 fine in a settlement with the state.

Nursing homes and institutions, as they stand in our current society, are not places that anyone should live, especially children. Sometimes there is no other choice, **but Marie had a choice.** Her tragic death highlights the dangers and inhumanity of what will only get worse unless we keep moving forward with the fight for a new society, that ceaseless movement of the dialectic that compels me to look past Marie's death: to look at the pictures of this young girl on her tribute page, and promise never to forget her and never to stop fighting.

—Suzanne Rose



From South Africa

Hunger games real for unemployed

Capetown, South Africa—During the Christmas break we received the most shocking news from Kwa-Zulu-Natal. The provincial traffic department advertised 90 positions for trainee traffic officers. More than 150,000 people applied, most of them between the ages of 18 and 20.

On Christmas Day 34,000 people received text messages saying that they had been shortlisted for these jobs. They were divided into two groups and asked to report to the Harry Gwala Stadium on Dec. 27 and 28. They were not told what to expect.

When the thousands of hopeful and excited young people arrived at the stadium, they were told that they had to perform a fitness test—running four kilometers. The weather was very hot and no water or medical care was provided. Many of these young people had already traveled long distances to reach the stadium. Many of them were not properly dressed for a four kilometer run in the heat.

On the first day hundreds of people collapsed and six died. A seventh person committed suicide. On the second day the so-called fitness test was repeated. By Sunday 230 people were in hospital.

This is not an isolated case. There have been many times where thousands of young people have turned up for a handful of jobs.

The politicians call the loss of seven young people in

WORKSHOPTALKS

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are about to enroll millions of new paying members expecting real healthcare, frontline care-staff face layoffs. Yet more supervisors to monitor costs and revenue are being hired.

MARKETING OVER HEALING

With 4 million additional Californians about to get health insurance, there is expected to be an immense doctor shortage. What doctors actually **do** has already been transformed by new marketing directives. TV commercials brag that the HMO offers "easy access to your doctor" at the click of a mouse. Doctors where I work now complain that they have been forced to do their own clerical work, answering several hundred e-mails from patients a day.

Little time is left to actually see patients in person because, like the rest of us, doctors have become tethered to the computer all day. As one worker expressed it, the problem is not only that HMOs want to replace healthcare workers with robots, but "they actually treat us as if we were robots."

A Dec. 16, 2012 *New York Times* editorial, "When the Doctor is Not Needed," touted the healthcare offered by retail clinics in drugstore chains like CVS and Walgreens. The new trend uses less expensive workers "to consult with patients over the phone by asking questions devised by experts."

The editorial pointed out the immense cost-saving potential of "self-care," where for many ailments "the patient could consult by phone or e-mail with a nurse..." and even be "allowed to teach other patients" procedures like hemo-dialysis. The *Times* concluded, "the Affordable Care Act contains many provisions that should help relieve the shortage of primary care providers, both doctors and other healthcare professionals."

The only department growing at our HMO is the Call Center because of the tremendous savings afforded by preventing patients from seeing a skilled healthcare provider. Aides and clericals, untrained in nursing or medicine, are left on the floor to give medication advice to patients, because pharmacists and nurses are unavailable, as reductions in staffing levels have made them scarce also. This is the real cost of the HMO's financial bottom line.

PLANNED SCARCITY

But we rank-and-file workers know it's a manufactured scarcity, designed by cost-cutting through deskilling and hi-tech, where mechanization is taking the human beings out of providing healthcare. Our HMO recently announced their intention to lay off approximately 400 registered nurses even as patients continue to be warehoused for hours in the ER due to staffing shortages.

At one of our recent staff meetings, the union rep lectured us workers to "appreciate the job you still have" and not complain about ever growing speedup and staff reductions, "because it's a tough competitive market out there." The union rep forgot that her paycheck comes from our union dues.

She was also tacitly saying that the financial health of corporations trumps the health of patients. That is what drives this brave new world of healthcare "reform." Patients will ultimately have to rely on themselves to deliver their own healthcare. Healthcare cannot compete against the bottom line until we restructure the whole society around human needs.

Pietermaritzburg a tragedy. They also called the massacre at Marikana a tragedy and the murder of Andries Tatane a tragedy. (See Sept.-Oct. 2012 *N&L*.) This is not only a tragedy. It is a disgrace. It is an outrage.

It is a disgrace that so many young people have no jobs or income or access to education. It is an outrage that people who are desperate for jobs are treated in such an inhuman manner. If the apartheid government had done this, it would have been an international scandal. There would have been protests around the world.

It is very clear to us that we are held in contempt by the politicians who say that they are representing us and carrying out the second transition in the national democratic revolution on our behalf. We are not human beings to them. We are just ladders to them. They are predators becoming rich and powerful in the name of our suffering and struggle. They are the real counter-revolutionaries.

The lives of people who are poor and Black count for nothing in this country. They count for nothing to the capitalists, to the politicians and even to some of the media. It is our duty to insist that the lives of all people count.

People must be held accountable for the outrage in Pietermaritzburg. We fully support the call for the resignation of the Member of the Executive Council for Transport in the province, Willies Mchunu. He was discredited in 2009 for his role in supporting the armed attack on Abahlali baseMjondolo by African National Congress supporters.

We reject the statement by the South African Communist Party (SACP) in support of Mchunu with all the contempt that it deserves. The SACP are nothing but apologists for oppression.

Frantz Fanon wrote that: "A society that drives its members to desperate solutions is a non-viable society, a society to be replaced." Our society is not viable. It must be replaced.

—Ayanda Kota, Unemployed Peoples Movement

Forced labor in China

In January, as Xi Jinping's term as head of the Communist Party of China was beginning, the head of the Political and Legal Committee kinda sorta promised the end of "re-education through labor." Local police have been able send at their discretion those "disrupting public order" to labor camps since the 1957 crackdown on the freer expression of the 100 Flowers period. Even now the camps hold over 150,000 for as long as four years.

The labor camps, alongside the full criminalization of labor protests and other challenges to the regime, have underpinned China's state-capitalist labor system. Like the workhouses of Ebenezer Scrooge-era England, and post-Civil War sheriffs emptying their jailhouses onto Southern plantations, forced labor is intended as a threat to all the workers not yet incarcerated.

Popular outrage, not a reform-minded regime, is the impetus behind any move to soften the labor camp system. Last August Tang Hui was given a year and a half in a labor camp in retaliation for daily petitioning that a harsher sentence be given to the seven men who had raped her then-eleven-year-old daughter and dragged her into prostitution. Public outrage forced Tang Hui's release after eight days.

But this January, when Tang Hui demanded an apology and compensation for the actions taken against her, the authorities denied her an apology and actually affirmed her sentence. Likewise, the promise to end labor camps, leaked as a trial balloon, was almost immediately twisted into proposals to "reform" the re-education-through-labor system of unfreedom.

—Bob McGuire

Wilderness of violence

Battle Creek, Mich.—In Michigan, a governor attacks organized labor, signing so-called "right-to-work" legislation.

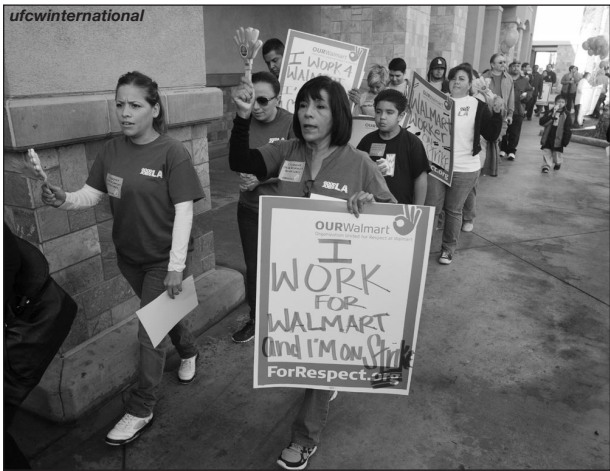
In Connecticut, a gunman takes aim at schoolchildren and their teachers and pulls the trigger.

We are lost in a wilderness of criminality and violence, and there is no way out under capitalism. I remember talking to a Battle Creek police officer years ago, complaining about the increased crime in my neighborhood. Her response? Two words—"job security." There is no solution to the problems of crime and violence under capitalism because they are not problems to the police, courts and prisons.

In the Paris Commune of 1871 it was noted that crime and violence nearly disappeared after the revolutionary workers expelled the capitalists. In order to survive today, we need a new compass, guided by the principles of Marxist-Humanism, to set a new bearing out of the wilderness.

—Ex-postal worker

Walmart workers strike



Workers struck at Walmart in Pico Rivera, Calif., on Nov. 20, demanding an end to retaliation against workers who speak out. On Nov. 23, the day after Thanksgiving, demonstrations and some strikes occurred at about 1,000 Walmart stores in 100 cities for better wages and working conditions. On Dec. 14 workers in the U.S. and nine other countries rallied at Walmart stores and subsidiaries, denouncing retaliation against workers trying to organize. This followed a one-day strike at a Walmart supply warehouse in Mira Loma, Calif., over unsafe and unsanitary conditions, and a three-week strike at a Walmart supply warehouse in Elwood, Ill., over sexual harassment, dangerous working conditions, unpaid wages and retaliation against organizers. The Elwood workers won full back pay and a promise to end workplace retaliation.

Teachers and allies fight restructuring

Lake County, Ill.—Recently, teachers in my district received a warning that the district would be undergoing "restructuring" for the 2013-14 school year. When the superintendent visited our school after the winter break, she informed us that scores were still not reaching our goal and that sweeping changes would be necessary.

She needed to submit a "bold and innovative plan" to the state superintendent by Jan. 18 or we could be taken over by the state (i.e., all staff would be fired). We had approximately nine days to pull a plan together, with no information or ability to collaborate with other teachers.

The superintendent herself proposed changing the organization of our schools into "grade level centers." This would remove children from the schools and teachers they know, and might mean that children from the same family would attend different schools—a parent's transportation nightmare for drop-off/pick-up.

Then in advance of the Jan. 14 Board of Education meeting, for the first time the union exploded into action. In three days there were four meetings—two in secret. We received buttons, "An injury to one is an injury to all," which we were instructed to wear for the rest of the year. A special "emergency communications committee" was assembled for a mass action with teachers, assistants, secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, and building grounds crews.

At the Board meeting, after three hours they were still on the first point: Open Comment from the community. The most vocal and passionate group were the parents who came to support their children and the teachers. Teachers, kindergarten and elementary, middle school, and high school, got up. The current and former union presidents spoke.

A high school junior talked passionately about the need for healthy school lunches, and presented photos of moldy bread served to students. She had surveyed over 100 students, and quantitative data supported her argument on how to make lunches healthy. After her three minutes were up, the Board President attempted to stop her. The parent in line to speak after her said, "She can have my time," and the one after that and the one after that said the same.

One parent after another delivered scathing attacks on the superintendent and her upper-level administration. The superintendent said that of five options given to the district by the state, only one was viable. The parents said it seemed like the only option she saw as "viable" was the one that insured she remained as superintendent. One parent asked, "Can you go to the state superintendent and present another possible option to consider: your resignation?" This was met with thunderous applause.

Parents were livid that data on the supposed dire state of district scores had been collected for four years, but had never been shared with them. One parent said, "I love my teachers and how they do their jobs. They care and they work so hard under unbelievable conditions. I don't agree with how YOU are doing YOUR jobs."

As I left the Board meeting, I felt the most gratified in my six years as a teacher. The satisfaction of having the truth finally be told touched me to my foundation.

The following morning we heard the news that the adjoining school district had just gone out on strike.

—Teacher

FROM THE WRITINGS OF

RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: This year marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of the Marxist-Humanist classic *American Civilization on Trial*, originally with the overline "100 Years after the Emancipation Proclamation," whose 150th anniversary was January 1, 2013. The original subtitle, "The Negro as Touchstone of History," was changed in later editions to "Black Masses as Vanguard." Written by Raya Dunayevskaya, the pamphlet was issued as a statement by the National Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees. To mark this double anniversary, we present the Political Letter Dunayevskaya wrote on April 15, 1963, titled, "American Civilization on Trial, as Statement of Our Views and as Basis for Follow-Up Studies and Articles." It can be found in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, #3082-87. Between the writing of this letter and the pamphlet's publication in May 1963, minor changes were made to the table of contents and to the passage quoted below. Except as noted, those changes have been incorporated here. All footnotes were added by the editors.

Dear Friends:

It is seldom that any of our Political Letters deal with internal rather than external events. This one will do so for two basic reasons, which are of the utmost importance for our organizational growth: (1) it is imperative that each and every one of us internalize *American Civilization on Trial* so that we can, at a moment's notice, make a comprehensive presentation of these views to outside groups and individuals; (2) it is equally important that we do not consider this pamphlet as a "finished work," but that we constantly expand it, reinterpret it, and bring it up to date.

For example, on the day—Friday, April 12—when I was to make a presentation of it to the Detroit local, news dispatches announced that Switzerland had expelled one Erich Rajakovic, Adolf Eichmann's right-hand man, who had been responsible for the murder of 110,000 Dutch Jews, including Anne Frank. Despite all the tears that had been shed over the *Diary of Anne Frank*, as a book, as a play, as a movie, which may have equalled the tears shed over Eliza trying to escape over the ice as she was pursued by the hound dogs,¹ the Storm Trooper Rajakovic easily melted into the crowd at Munich, Germany, and made good his escape; while, at the same time, in our South, the savage use of savage dogs against the Freedom Fighters of today made it impossible for any of them to escape that dragnet. **In a word, not only does the todayness of history make possible the presentation of *American Civilization on Trial* as a living document, but the one-worldedness of today allows for its application on an international scale.**

Toward both these ends, I wish, first, to present the title and contents page of the pamphlet in its final form as it is now going to press:

**100 Years after the Emancipation Proclamation
American Civilization on Trial
Negro as Touchstone of History**

Introduction

- 1. Of Patriots, Scoundrels and Slave Masters
- 2. Compelling Issues at Stake

Part I. From the First through the Second American Revolution

- 1. Abolitionism, First Phase: From "Moral Suasion" to Harpers Ferry
- 2. Abolitionism, Second Phase: The Unfinished Revolution

Part II. The Still Unfinished Revolution

- 1. Northern Labor Struggles to Break Capital's Stranglehold, 1877-97
- 2. 1¼ Million Forgotten Negro Populists
- 3. Populism and Intellectual Ferment²

Part III. Imperialism and Racism

- 1. Rise of Monopoly Capital
- 2. Plunge into Imperialism
- 3. Racism
- 4. New Awakening of Labor: The IWW

Part IV. Nationalism and Internationalism

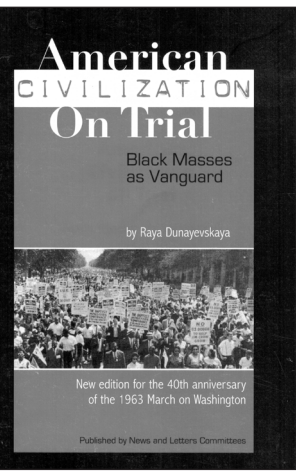
- 1. The Negro Moves North
- 1. In Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Eliza crosses the icy Ohio River to escape slavery.
- 2. As published, this section was incorporated into the previous section.

150 years after the Emancipation Proclamation

American Civilization on Trial:
Black masses as vanguard
and the dialectic of history

- 2. Garveyism vs. Talented Tenth
- 3. Marxism
- Part V. From Depression through World War II
 - 1. The CIO Changes the Face of the Nation and Makes a Break in Negro "Nationalism"
 - 2. March on Washington Movement
 - 3. The Communists Oppose the Independent Negro Movement
- Part VI. The Negro as the Touchstone of History
 - 1. Urbanization of Negroes
 - 2. The Two-Way Road to African Revolutions
- Part VII. Facing the Challenge, 1943-1963
 - 1. The Self-Determination of People and Ideas
 - 2. The New Voices We Heard
 - 3. What We Stand For—and Who We Are

Please note Part VI. Instead of being a sub-section under "What Now?" "The Negro as Touchstone" has not only become a full part, but it is no longer restricted to the American scene. That is to say, by including the section on the African Revolutions here, we are able to present the international role of the Negro. I hope many friends will wish to expand this section by various articles in *News & Letters*. The main points of expansion, however, will come on the American scene. In this respect, I would like to single out one of the additions I made in order to encourage others to take advantage of the condensed form of the pamphlet to elaborate on other phases of American development that we couldn't possibly go into, in tracing the dialectic of history that has never before been traced from a Marxist-Humanist viewpoint. I am referring to Part II—"The Still Unfinished Revolution"—where it was necessary to take note both of the economic determinist view of the Civil War as an "economic revolution,"



American Civilization on Trial, 1983 (left) and 2003 (right) editions.

and to argue against the attitude that the Jefferson-Jackson-Lincoln tradition is fundamentally different from the "other" tradition:³

The new phase of Northern capitalist development had, of course, been a motivating force for the Civil War. But, the economic determinist view notwithstanding, it **was not** the propellant. The Second American Revolution was more than an "economic revolution." Much as the industrialists wished to break the monopoly of commercial over industrial capital, of American slavishness to British textile manufacturing, "cash and compromise" was too ingrained an element of American capitalism for the industrialists to venture forth into civil war. **Only the most prodigious revolutionary exertions by slaves, Abolitionists and, in many of its stages, labor, could tear apart the power link of cash and compromise that bound together cotton and textiles; cotton growers, cotton shippers and financiers.** "If Lincoln has grown," wrote Wendell Phillips after the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, "it is quite natural. We watered him." At the same time, however, it was no accident that Lincoln **chose** Andrew Johnson as his running mate for the second term, in place of the Vice-President of the first term, Hannibal Hamlin, who was a friend of the Abolitionists. The objective compulsion of capitalist industrialization won over the freedom forces.⁴ The Civil War brought to a climax and summed up the paradox of the Jefferson-Jackson-Lincoln liberal presidential tradition. **In office**, Jefferson and the Jeffersonians were fulfilled Hamiltonians. **In office**, Jacksonian democracy turned out to be something very different from the rule of farmer and mechanic against Eastern finance capital.... In the same manner, Lincoln, **in office**, developed the "American System" more in line with the concept of the "Great Compromiser," Henry Clay, than in the spirit of a "Great Emancipator" heading the Second American Revolution....

3. This passage appears on p. 40 of the 2003 edition of *American Civilization on Trial*.
4. This sentence did not appear in the published version.

It would be excellent if someone could develop the differences between the Abolitionists—wholly devoted to an idea, the idea of freedom, without wanting anything for themselves—and the Populists who fought for limited rights and could produce so contradictory a character as Tom Watson.⁵ But, above all, where expansion is needed is in Part VII: *Facing the Challenge, 1943-1963*, especially the final section on "What We Stand For—and Who We Are." In this way, *American Civilization on Trial* will bring to organizational consciousness the underlying philosophy of both the movement of history and its todayness.

5. The section on Populism in *American Civilization on Trial* (pp. 46-48) describes how Tom Watson, later to become "the typical white supremacist," advocated and acted for white and Black solidarity at the height of the Populist movement.

EDITORIAL

continued from p. 1

who campaigned as a moderate, said right-to-work was not on his agenda, he did an about-face and signed the right-to-work bill the day it passed the legislature. The law goes into effect on April 1 and will cover all public and private employees except police and firefighters. Labor leaders got a constitutional proposition on the November ballot that would have effectively stopped any right-to-work legislation. The anger and disappointment with union leaders was apparent when that proposition failed. What passed by 52% with the backing of labor activists, concerned parents and regular citizens was a proposal to remove the emergency manager law. Under the rejected law, the emergency manager, appointed by the governor, took dictatorial power over a city in financial distress, including the right to void union contracts and override elected school boards.

WILL OF THE VOTERS DISREGARDED

Snyder's new emergency manager law is similar to the one rejected by the voters, allowing an unelected manager to void contracts, sell municipal property, take control of school districts and consolidate or dissolve municipal governments. A new "Educational Achievement Authority" will cancel contracts for employees of schools transferred into the system, requiring them to negotiate with the anti-labor appointed Emergency Manager. The new law is so similar to the one that was voted down that it faces legal challenges. Snyder brays, "This legislation demonstrates that we clearly heard and respected the will of the voters," but he made sure to include a mechanism in the revised law sheltering it from any future voter referendum. Detroit activist and school board member Elena Herrada expressed the widespread outrage over Snyder's underhanded practice: "We won repeal of Public Act 4. They stay in place without leaving for one day, until a new law that cannot be repealed is written. I never dreamed of the day when Mexican politics looked better than U.S. politics. For all those millions of Mexicans who can't vote in the U.S.: Don't feel like you're missing anything!"

ATTACKS ON WOMEN AS WELL

The other major legislation rammed through shows again the contempt Snyder and the Republican-controlled legislature have for those they pretend to represent. Despite huge demonstrations in June against similar legislation—including a bill forcing a woman to carry a dead fetus to term—the lame ducks pushed through a bill that classifies fetal remains at 10 weeks, when it weighs a half ounce, as a dead body. Women who experience spontaneous abortion as well as ones by choice have to request the remains be "cremated, buried or interred." In an attempt to force clinics to close, they mandated absurd standards for the size of exam rooms, hallways, number of parking spaces, etc. It would restrict telemedical abortions, which provide essential health services to women in rural areas; prevent private insurance companies from covering abortion services; and, ominously, allow medical personnel to refuse needed health services—not only abortion—if it is against their "moral belief" or a "matter of conscience." This opens the door for doctors to refuse to write birth control prescriptions or treat many ailments. That this could happen in the birthplace of the UAW was a huge victory for Snyder and his reactionary Republican cronies. Like Arizona's 2010 anti-immigrant law, they hope that this new legislation will be a model for right-wing blitzkriegs across the land. Snyder was helped by a huge infusion of money from the 1% across the U.S. This must be opposed by the rest of us if we are to keep the poison from spreading.

Now off the press: *The Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya

Excerpts from the Foreword:

Nobody, least of all Marxists, foresaw the great historic divide which would be opened by the Arab Spring beginning in 2010. When Mohammed Bouazizi and Hussein Nagi Felhi killed themselves to protest the miserable conditions of life for Tunisian youth, they set off a year of revolutionary struggle that has shaken the world to its foundations. The region, where politics and everyday life had been delimited by the Cold War and the politics of oil, has been redefined by an uncompromising demand for human dignity.

This demand was key to lifting the incubus of contempt for the masses that allowed state-capitalist regimes like that of the Baathists to represent themselves as "Arab socialism." In truth they were bizarre mixtures of Stalinism, fascism, and hereditary monarchism, imposing the "stability" of unfreedom to keep themselves in power, and to keep capitalism's lifeblood commodity, oil, flowing to America, Europe and China.

The recognition of this profound change was expressed by one Lebanese student this way: "We are not used to seeing something like this in this part of the world. It is bigger than a dream in a region where people keep saying, 'What can we do?' Young people across the Arab world should go to the streets and do the same. It is time that we claim our rights." This is exactly what has happened in country after country. The movement has created consternation among the world's rulers. It has inspired worldwide freedom movements.

In response, powerful forces of counter-revolution have been arrayed against this new movement, both from without and, at times, from within. There has been a tremendous effort to limit the revolution in Egypt, for example, within the bounds of neoliberalism and bourgeois democracy. The U.S.-funded military remains a pillar of reaction. At the same time, reactionary religious elements have attacked women physically and denied their revolutionary role.

Within the Western Left, the crisis is manifested as ideological pollution when so many insist that enemy number one is U.S. imperialism and therefore Syrian President Assad must not be opposed. This lays bare the fixation on first negation, what one is against—and that opposition is not even directed at the capitalist system, but rather at one of its manifestations. Where is Karl Marx's vantage point, the freedom of the masses? In fact, Syria today has become the test of one's attitude to revolution itself, as were Spain in the 1930s and Bosnia in the 1990s.

These obstacles spell out the need for a revolutionary philosophy—specifically, Marx's philosophy of revolution in permanence as it has been recreated in Marxist-Humanism. This publication is a contribution to this new moment when Marxism needs to be recreated, not applied mechanically in any reductionist manner, but realized in its fullness as a philosophy of history.

This is for no abstract or academic reason, but because without such a vision even the most unavoidable compromises can open the doors to a return of the old, oppressive forms of life that bide their time within the mysteries of the commodity form.

What must tower above all struggles against exploitation, nationally and internationally, is the perspective of a totally classless society; the vision of its ground would be "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

—Raya Dunayevskaya

Raya Dunayevskaya spelled out Marx's Marxism as the "philosophy of revolution in permanence" in her 1982 book, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*. It is that book's central philosophic category. As she was writing it, she was also involved in working out and projecting that concept in support of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. It was a joining together of philosophy and organization that allowed her to develop a new view of Marx's Marxism in its entirety, including his late work on women and revolution in non-industrial societies.

It was through Dunayevskaya's participation in the discussions among Iranian revolutionaries that Marxist-Humanism became indigenous to the region. She insisted on the leading role of the working class, which, by placing the human being over the commodity, oil, raised a profound challenge to the entire state-capitalist world. She also pointed to the movement of Iranian women for their own liberation as essential to the dialectics of the revolution. Women's freedom was not a nice, "democratic" extra, but was both the Iranian women's own demand and the exact measure of how

deep the uprooting of the old, oppressive social order needed to be to avoid the backward pull of reactionary religion embodied by Khomeini.

The essays and letters on Iran included here represent Marxist-Humanism's fundamental contributions to an ongoing struggle that sprang to life again after Iran's stolen election of 2009. The roots of revolution remain alive in Iran in the struggles of women, workers, youth, and national minorities, among others. Iranian revolutionaries are watching the Arab Spring with the greatest interest and in the sure knowledge that their day will come again.

These collected writings on the Middle East also provide an extensive analysis of Palestinian/Israeli relations. The Arab Spring has created an opening for the creation of new human relations between Palestinians and Israelis. Part of this would require a new comprehension of history that can be released through a philosophic confrontation with Marx's philosophy. As Dunayevskaya pointed out, it was in Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question" that he first formulated his concept of "revolution in permanence." It is where his philosophic critique of bourgeois society came together with his recognition of the unfinished character of the bourgeois revolution, thus determining his attitude toward revolution itself:

At times of special self-confidence, political life seeks to suppress its prerequisite, civil society and the elements composing this society, and to constitute itself as the real species-life of man devoid of contradictions. But it can achieve this only by coming into violent contradiction with its own conditions of life, only by declaring the revolution to be permanent, and therefore the political drama necessarily ends with the re-establishment of religion, private property, and all the elements of civil society, just as war ends with peace.



Oil workers on strike in Iran, October 1978.

Today, in the context of recognizing Palestinian self-determination, nothing could release greater practical energies than the concretizing of this philosophy.

The Arab Spring can become a real turning point in human history. Against the backdrop of a state-capitalist world in a deep and intractable crisis,

the vision of self-determination, courage, dignity and creativity can raise itself into an absolute opposition to the degraded reality of endless cutbacks, austerity, and accompanying bigotry that is all capitalism is offering humanity.

It is nothing less than phenomenal that this most concrete of historical movements demands, of its essence, a confrontation with Marx's philosophy in its entirety. It is not enough to state his or our own conclusions.

Rather, it is necessary to recreate what Marx began as an investigation of the "riddle of history" in the 1840s and developed as the vision of *revolution in permanence* that was spelled out as a classless society in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*. This was Raya Dunayevskaya's political and organizational project from her philosophic breakthrough on Hegel's Absolutes in 1953 through to her work on organization and philosophy of the 1980s that was informed so concretely by the Iranian Revolution.

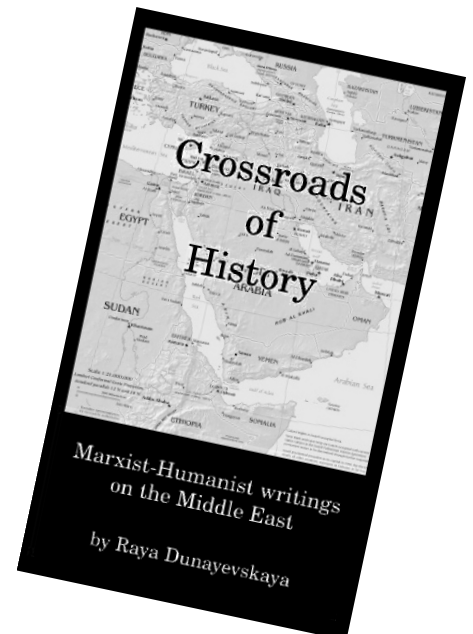
It is the masses making history that clarifies the role of revolutionary organization. That role is the comprehension of history as the human struggle for self-determination and freedom, in order to project in the course of struggle the necessary conditions for a truly free human society—the many paths to reach that needed new society will not be easy to work out.

From the revolutions in the Middle East to Occupy Wall Street that they inspired, masses of people are searching for those paths to a new society, in reality as in thought. At such moments second negativity, far from a "mere abstraction," becomes the most concrete, pressing need of humanity—that revolution in permanence that carries humanity toward greater freedom.

In publishing this collection of Raya Dunayevskaya's writings on the Middle East and revolution in permanence, we hope to be part of the worldwide dialogue that will move the revolution, and humanity, beyond the inhuman system of capitalism with its eternal threats of war and deprivation, its racism, sexism and heterosexism. In no respect are we willing to be passive spectators at yet another wrong turning of history.

—Gerry Emmett, for the Resident Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees, September 2012

Special offer on...



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RAVAGES OF CAPITALISM SHOW NEED FOR NEW WORLD

The article on "Climate chaos and capitalism" (Sept.-Oct. 2012 *N&L*) is very relevant, especially the conclusion about how capitalism's contradiction is that the growth of the economy, of capitalist production, means more global warming and climate change worldwide.

Activist for humans and environment
Los Angeles

The technologies we have created for capital are objects of enslavement. The difference between technology as it is and when it will be a tool, is where we want to go. Substance is experienced by Subject. What we see is determined historically. We don't understand all of nature. We only understand what we can. It is our experience of the world, not what it actually is. It is not whether things are predetermined, it's that we choose what we feel is freedom, we choose what is human.

D. Chêneville
Oakland, Calif.

African Americans lived through what happened in the U.S., but I don't think it should only be "American Civilization on Trial." The whole world should be on trial. The whole world is suffering under capitalism.

Iranian American
Los Angeles

I'm now beginning to grasp that all the conditions for the death of capitalism can be in place but, like an animated corpse, it will go on and on until it gets a hefty, revolutionary push from a massive, subjective force of its own creation: the laboring class. I thought the falling rate of profit meant no one needs to do anything, that capitalism would do itself in. Knowing that the masses of workers need to shove capitalism over the cliff doesn't mean it will ever happen. For one thing, it isn't just workers who have to rise up. The perversions of capitalism are so deep that all of humanity must take part in delivering the final blow.

David
Bay Area



A Jan. 8 *New York Times* article exposes the dangerous, ineffective, slow, self-serving, brainless and heartless way the Japanese Government is handling cleanup nearly two years after so many citizens of Fukushima lost their families and homes. It also failed to protect citizens in the rest of Japan (and the world) from harmful radiation. Lessons from Chernobyl and Three Mile Island are barely, haphazardly applied.

From Syria to Haiti to the U.S., the dynamic is similar. We need a new way of looking at the world, an evolution of humankind into a new creature for whom human development is the most important value. That's why I stay with News and Letters Committees. Besides working on the surface—putting out a newspaper with real news, speaking at rallies and marches, being in international solidarity with those who seek freedom—News and Letters goes below the surface to where people think. We never stop trying to describe the present situation because that's the very first step in changing it.

January
Chicago

OCCUPY AND REVOLUTION

It should be no surprise that the first major act of Mayor Bloomberg in response to Hurricane Sandy was to reopen the New York Stock Exchange, that bastion of capitalist greed. Bloomberg did not evacuate the City hospitals until after the storm had hit, endangering thousands of patients. Public housing, located in regions close to the water, did not have power for over a week after the rest of the city. Seniors and disabled were hit especially hard. The most effective force in helping people was "Occupy Sandy," not the nonexistent bureaucratic social welfare agencies. Bloomberg did not cancel the New York City Marathon until mass outrage made him.

We need a revolution to reverse the course of calamity before we go past the point of no return. We need a revolution that will create new forms of human and social relations, under the banner of a New Humanism, that of Karl Marx.

A Sandy survivor
Queens, New York

NEW PUBLICATIONS OF MARXIST CLASSICS

A new South Asian edition of *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* by Raya Dunayevskaya has been published in India.

South Asian readers can order it from Aakar Books, <http://aakarbooks.com/>, 28-E, Pocket-IV, Mayur Vihar Phase-I, Delhi-110 091, India. Phone: 91-11-2279-5505. Telefax: 91-11-2279-5641. Email: aakarbooks@gmail.com.

Franklin Dmitryev
Chicago

In Mexico, there has come to light a trove of notebooks of Victor Serge, the Franco-Russian novelist and revolutionary (1890-1947). They have been published in France, beautifully edited, by Agone in Marseille. In the U.S., the first complete English translation of Serge's *Memoirs of a Revolutionary: 1905-1941* was published last year by NY Review of Books Classics. In addition to Peter Sedgwick's Introduction and a Foreword by Adam Hochschild, this edition includes a Glossary, which I prepared to help readers cope with all those Russian names. Unfortunately, my Postface, "Victor Serge's Political Testament" was omitted by mistake. Finally, for those who live in the New York area, I will be hosting a class on Serge at the Brecht Forum this Spring and Fall, starting with public lectures on Feb. 2 and 9 co-sponsored by NYRB Classics and Haymarket Books.

Richard Greeman
New York

The new book, *Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on*

the Middle East, is very welcome news, especially since the situation there becomes more confusing and ominous daily.

The recent developments in Mali, with the hostage-taking in particular, indicate both the volatility in the region and the growing strength of the Islamic fundamentalists. The writings by Raya Dunayevskaya will provide a valuable background for the understanding of what is happening and disclose the importance of dialectics in making analyses.

Steady Reader
Detroit

Publishing *Crossroads of History*, a collection of Raya Dunayevskaya's political essays, comes at an important moment. The Arab Spring is at a crossroads. These new beginnings are under severe threat. It is not alone a question of arms and power. A clarification of ideas, indeed a battle of ideas, is needed, if revolutionaries are to find a way forward.

Dunayevskaya's vast Middle East writings over several decades can make an important contribution. She doesn't provide an answer for today, but the Marxist-Humanist methodology and vision she forged in her writings on the Iranian Revolution, on Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Question, Israel's occupation, anti-Semitism—the entire Middle East cauldron—can be of crucial assistance if revolutionaries are to find a way forward.

Correspondent
Mexico

READERS' VIEWS

This year is the 50th anniversary of the publication of *American Civilization on Trial*. It's not just a number that compels us to look at it today. The outpouring of response to Trayvon Martin's murder last February forced "mainstream" America to confront that his experience was the reality for masses of Black and Latino Americans, especially young men. When Occupy Wall Street burst forth last fall, attracting hundreds of thousands of young people, idealistic and enthusiastic about developing new human relations, it wasn't long before people of color and women felt the need to form caucuses, some of them separate from the larger General Assemblies.

Occupy supporter
Detroit

We have had feminist General Assemblies because we need more dialogue. We need a space to uncover relations, such as how capitalism dominates us. A horizontal structure can still be exclusive. Feminist initiatives are not just about how many women are speaking but whether the ideas are taken seriously.

Woman occupier
New York

WOMEN'S LIBERATION

What set the rape in India apart from others was both the horrible brutality of it and then the government's completely wrong response to the demonstrations. But if anyone thinks it's so much better in the good old USA, think again. Here one in six women have been raped or suffered an attempted rape while for women in the U.S. military it is one out of three women who reports sexual assault—not from the enemy, but from her male comrades-in-arms. Here we have politicians pontificating about "legitimate rape" and quoting phony or non-existent science to insist that a raped woman can't get pregnant. Date rape is rife on U.S. campuses and often the poorest women, those who live in public housing, are raped repeatedly. I'm so glad to see the massive demonstrations in India. They are not only against individual rapists but "rape culture"—their whole society's attitude and actions towards women. We need the same thing here.



Women's Liberationist
Chicago

Wherever we look, women are subjected to political and cultural oppression. I recognize that many men, brought up believing that women have a social position beneath them, will find it difficult to accept a totally different way to relate to women. My own continuing transformation began in earnest when *N&L* sent me an article on women's liberation that enabled me to move from an abstract idea of equality to a more concrete interpretation of what women's liberation looks like in the context of Marx's concept of the man/woman relation.

Faruq
Crescent City, Calif.

Something that often amazes us in Europe is the weird rules that we hear from the U.S., absurd and sometimes inhuman ones. You see that in the article on "Rape and people with Disabilities" in the Nov.-Dec. *N&L*. This poor child and her family. I can't believe it. The U.S. advertises itself as the "most developed country." It should only be called "the most economically developed."

Young feminist
Spain

MALI CRISIS

It's horrible that Islamic fanatics have hijacked a genuine freedom movement, the one you wrote of in the July-Aug. 2012 article, "Mali's contradiction." The article takes up how the Tuareg people have been fighting for self-determination for years in a national movement for liberation. While the French, with help from the U.S., are now fighting the "reign of terror" that fundamentalist groups have inflicted on the people, I doubt they are the least bit interested in helping the Tuareg in their struggle for freedom and a land they can call their own and feel safe in.

A reader
Los Angeles

HEGEL'S ABSOLUTE METHOD

Some turn away from philosophy, blaming it as inadequate because ideas remain "lofty," and are not realized. In contrast, Marx said the world needs to be made philosophical. The Paris Commune made it clear to Marx that the way the world presents itself to us is a function of human relations. The power of abstraction is what sets humans apart. We encounter each other and nature through abstractions, through the meaning we give the other and the world.

Old-time Marxist-Humanist
California

Workers' self-activity is very close to Hegel. It's unfair to workers that their movements are called "spontaneous," as though revolutions are "sparked" and people are just "tired." There is a lot of thought that goes into the spontaneity.

Worker
Bay Area

Marx held that thought reflects the world. That means theory is not something smart guys give others to carry out, but the other way around. It's the masses in motion that give the intellectuals something to think about. Hegel is tracing the thought of philosophers, but they got their ideas from people engaged in creating the worlds out there.

David M'Oto
Oakland, Calif.

There's no other news organ in circulation today that gives its readers the algebra of revolution. Raya Dunayevskaya's 1953 letters detailing her amazing breakthrough on the Hegelian dialectic has given humanity the philosophical foundation necessary to not only transcend oppressive capital relations but also build a new society on new human foundations.

Prisoner
Pelican Bay, Calif.

WORK AND ALIENATION

News & Letters reported mass protests against the opening of a \$1.6 billion copper processing plant in Shifang, China (Sept.-Oct. 2012 *N&L*). There are hundreds of mass protests daily in China. Timothy Tang, who is protesting the opening of a chemical plant in Ningbo, said: "A lot of us don't need high growth rate, we don't need more high rises. We want blue skies and clean air to make our lives better. If high growth rates bring these kinds of negative impact, we'd rather the economy not grow at all." In other words: quality of life instead of capitalism's production for production's sake which results in labor doing work, work, work, in order to survive. Quality of life means labor becomes a space for human development and not just for survival. It means there is no unemployment.

Japanese American
California

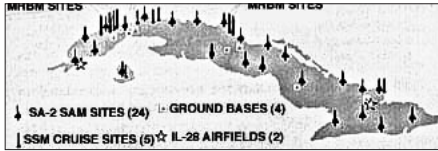
ARCHIVES AS LIVING

I have been following the readings for the 2012-2013 Marxist-Humanist discussions with great enthusiasm. I was especially energized by the "Women as force and reason of revolution" selections. Raya Dunayevskaya's 1970 piece "The Women's Liberation Movement as Reason and as Revolutionary Force" was fresh and relevant to today. This is no surprise since, to paraphrase Dunayevskaya herself, a freedom song is both universal and individual.

How refreshing and encouraging it was that such a great thinker admitted to not having always seen in *Oresteia* the awful indictment and wholly predictable misogyny of Athena's speech excusing Orestes for murdering his mother since his mother murdered his father. Dunayevskaya reminds us that art is in the service of vision, which, more often than not, and "even at its greatest," invigorates myths that conserve repressive orders, simply "updating characters." I cannot help but take Dunayevskaya's writing as a call to seriously engage pop culture. I feel that discussion within your pages of movies, such as *Lincoln* and *Django Unchained*, whose releases correspond with the second term of America's first African American president, would be fitting. I would expect a lively and thought-provoking exchange.

D. Perkins
Phoenix, Ariz.

It was stunning how Dunayevskaya's critique of the Left of 1962—over 50 years ago—spoke as if it was written about the Left today. (See "The Cuban Missile Crisis and Its Test of Movements' Negative Character," Nov.-Dec. 2012.) It's where she counsels us to *never* get into the position where we "sound so much against" one world power or country or group, "that we *appear to be for the other*. **Above all**," she warns, **"we oppose war not only as 'againters' but primarily because we are for a totally new society, on new, on human beginnings...."** How many times in our day has the Left come out and supported a monster like Qaddafi or Assad, simply because they were "against" the U.S.? She makes it clear



that it is completely insufficient, indeed just plain wrong, to base yourself only on what you oppose. If one as well works out what they are fighting *for*, one would never end up supporting some dictator only because of what the dictator opposes.

Always learning
Chicago

The Archives article by Dunayevskaya dealing with the Cuban missile crisis is a timely reminder of the dangers of authoritarian tendencies that exist in the U.S. today. Although it deals with the objective situation at the time of the crisis, the article also takes up the problems and threats to News and Letters then, and the principles that have to be maintained in order to continue and grow. Those same principles are more important today and require diligent observance.

Member
Detroit

Lucky for us, in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, Khrushchev withdrew his nuclear-armed missiles, but that threat lingers as today's world economic crisis is bringing capitalist countries with nuclear weapons into fierce competition for world resources that can turn into another global war.

She also mentioned that Cuba is "an outpost of single-party state-capitalism." Today, 50 years later, so many on the Left as well as Cuban rulers think of state-capitalist Cuba as a socialist or Communist country because they have eliminated private property or private corporations. Marx's analysis of capitalism goes much deeper than that.

Basho
Los Angeles

RACISM

During the conclusion of the Presidential campaign, Obama made an inspirational, emotional speech. The fact

that he has been harangued with charges of not being fully American demonstrates the long road that lies ahead in this country for racial progress. That road has been traveled by millions of Americans who are unfairly denied a job, incarcerated, monitored, detained, harassed and assaulted simply for their ethnicity. This is a struggle shared by millions around the globe, from Burma to Bosnia, from Syria and Israel to Darfur and Nigeria, and from Tulsa to Tlananmen.

Exile from Southeast Asia
Northern California

THE LEFT

I went to a rally in Chicago commemorating and protesting 11 years of Guantanamo's vile existence. That is good, but this one was dominated by World Can't Wait, a Revolutionary Communist Party front organization. It is mainly interested in promoting itself and raising money! Unfortunately, I believe the rally mainly helped the RCP, not the cause.

Mark
Chicago

Why isn't the Left supporting the Syrian rebels? We support the people of Gaza and others. Over 60,000 Syrians have lost their lives, most at the hands of the butcher al-Assad, the Syrian dictator of the mild demeanor. Do my fellow leftists have a conscience or a sense of humanity? Don't let narrow ideology prevent you from being on the side of life and justice. We must help stop the slaughter! Assad is not our friend or ally. He is a bloodthirsty dictator!

Long-time revolutionary
Midwest

THE RIGHT

Dunayevskaya's column, "Historic roots of far Right threat to U.S." (Sept.-Oct. 2012 *N&L*) explained neo-conservatism well. John Birchers today are against Medicare, as are the Koch brothers. Once, a teacher called me a "communist." J. Edgar Hoover accused

many of the same, whether they were or not. He survived because he had dirt on many presidents.

Iranian activist
Los Angeles

FROM BEHIND THE BARS



I like reading and getting a better view of the world. I get that from this paper. I also like Voices from the Inside. It lets me see that some prison systems are worse than the one in Illinois. Thank you for sending it to me all these years. My current outdate is in mid-2017—approximately 4½ years. Been in now 25½ years. Thanks again.

Male prisoner
Pinckneyville, Ill.

Our prison, V.S.P.W. (Valley State Prison for Women), has now changed to V.S.P. for Men. Men now have 31 of 33 prisons in California. So all of us women have now been stuffed into two prisons instead of three. Our medical and living conditions get worse but it seems Sacramento doesn't care.

Woman prisoner
Chowchilla, Calif.

I'm writing you because I'm an indigent inmate confined to the Behavioural Health Unit (BHU) and would like to receive your newspaper. I'm a homosexual. I've been down ever since 2009 on this case, but I served a year before that. I have never read a newspaper like yours. When I read Queer Notes, I feel good because I get to see what's going on in the world besides what's behind these walls. I'm so glad to read your newspaper and I thank my sister who let me read *N&L*. I look forward to reading more. Thank you for your time. Happy 2013, 'cause that's my year to shine. I max out.

Prisoner
Huntingdon, Penn.

TO OUR READERS: Can you donate the price of a sub (\$5) for a prisoner who cannot pay for one? It will be shared with many others.

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'Idle No More'

Winter is often seen as a quiet time in Canada. In one area, however, there is a major event right now: the emergence of a new and powerful movement of Indigenous people across Canada: "Idle No More." It grew out of resistance to the environmental destruction caused by the extraction of natural resources and the abrogation of Indigenous rights and environmental laws by the Stephen Harper administration, especially through Bill C-45.

After a long series of protests, rallies, letters, flash mobs, and highway and railway blockages—with no response from the government—a hunger strike by Attawapiskit Chief Theresa Spence forced Harper's hand. He agreed to a meeting with numerous Indigenous groups. That Jan. 11 meeting decided little except to have more talks. Nonetheless, it was open, unlike the previous closed-door negotiations. Many are skeptical in that everyone knows that Harper does not negotiate in good faith, but a resulting larger movement may lead to change.

The actions of the Canadian federal government are part of a plan to transform Canada into a world economic power in energy production and mineral extraction. To do so, Harper will have to steamroll over the Canadian people, which he will, eventually, be unable to do. The Idle No More movement has spread to Alaska and may spread elsewhere in the U. S., including to those fighting the Keystone XL pipeline through the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. We can expect the movement to grow, not just in size, but in ideas.

—D. Chêneville

Oscar Grant remembered



On New Year's Day 2013 Oscar Grant's mother, Wanda Johnson, spoke to about eighty people gathered for a vigil at Fruitvale BART station in Oakland, Calif., site of his murder by a BART cop on the same day in 2009. While disappointed by the low turnout, Johnson told us that the race does not go to the strong or the swift but to those who endure to the end.

—David M'Oto

Close Guantanamo

Los Angeles—On Jan. 10, 150 activists gathered outside the downtown Federal Building to protest the ongoing torture and indefinite detentions of Muslim prisoners for a decade, without charges. The press conference was sponsored by Amnesty International, Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace, and Immigrant Communities for Justice and Peace. Pacifica Radio KPFK, Global TV and other independent media along with Channel 7 were there.

Some of the many signs read "Extraordinary Rendition," "Close Guantanamo," "Abu Ghraib," "Bagram," "Torture = War Crime," "Drones, torture, indefinite detention," and "Stop the crimes of your government."

There was street theater. Sixteen people dressed in orange jump suits and black hoods over their heads were handcuffed behind their backs and knelt down during the speeches.

National radio DJ Casey Kasem was the first speaker. Another speaker said President Obama is the commander-in-chief of the biggest surveillance state ever. Others declared: **No torture in our name. Shut down Guantanamo.**

Names were read of those "cleared for transfer out of Guantanamo" yet still imprisoned there. An attorney who visited his client, Mohammed, three times in Guantanamo said torture has nothing to do with terrorist activity. Over 150 prisoners with no criminal, let alone terrorist, charges are still detained. Other speakers said the U.S. has trained other countries in interrogation and torture techniques and that torture is used, not to get information, but to create terror and fear in the community. There was a critique of the Academy-Award-nominated film *Zero Dark Thirty* because it calls torture "enhanced interrogation techniques."

The press conference ended imploring people to call Congress and President Obama.

—Basho

Pelican Bay families support prisoners

Editor's note: California Families Against Solitary Confinement (CFASC) came together during the prisoners' 2011 hunger strike initiated by prisoners in Security Housing Unit (SHU). To support the prisoners' ongoing movement, specifically the Agreement to Cease Hostilities (see Nov.-Dec. 2012 N&L), CFASC organized a bus for various families from Southern California to meet with their loved ones at Pelican Bay. Here are a few statements from participants.

* * *

Dolores Canales: Talking with all the families as we gathered to get on the bus, especially those who had never been to Pelican Bay, or for whom it's been many years, is overwhelming. It encourages me to get more people up there, to get families united. Some people can afford to come only once a year, if that often, so they are very thankful for this.

We have on this bus people who will be visiting folks on the yard as well as in the SHU. There is every race here. We're bringing the families together in a way that the prisoners got together inside, issuing an Agreement to End Hostilities. There will be disagreements. The difference is in how you work through them. Since the Agreement has been put out, we said, let's start working through our differences.

We wanted to include families of people on the yard, to build hope and reunification. CDC promotes itself as California Department of Correction and **Rehabilitation**. Family reunion is the biggest part of rehabilitation, giving you something to hope for, something to strive for, to build back family bonds. That is very hard to do when the prison is so far. The distance is overwhelming. One woman on the bus is from San Diego. She has been writing her husband about their two kids, but the distance makes it impossible for them to come. It is almost 1,000 miles one way. Another family told me that to come up to Pelican Bay costs them \$500-\$600. Because of the distance and the expense, one person on the bus has not seen her loved one for 18 years! It's a real hardship. They want to visit, they want to be with

March against violence

Chicago—Dozens of people marched on Chicago's South Side to take a stand against violence on Jan. 15, followed by a speakout and vigil. Occupy the Southside organized this "King on King march" down Martin Luther King Jr. Drive from 63rd to Emmett Till Road.

"We're here," explained a Black woman activist with Occupy the Southside, "because we want peace in the neighborhood. In every city I've been to, King Drive is a volatile, dangerous, very violent area. **We want to show the contradiction between what happens on King Drive and King the man.** Also, not just pray for peace but act for peace. We're asking folks to sign a peace pledge to live non-violent lives. If we could get people to agree that living non-violently is the way to go, then we can make some real changes. That's what we're hoping to begin today. I'm heartened when I look around and see all the people here, Black, Brown, white, coming together, in a way that Dr. King would have wanted."

A Latino member of Southside Together Organizing for Power told N&L:

"On this day we are commemorating the 506 people who got killed this past year through violence in the city of Chicago. We should not have any murders in Chicago. If nothing is done, violence is going to get worse. We want to show the city that we're not putting up with the violence anymore. Enough is enough."

Over the past decade, Chicago murders have outnumbered U.S. troop deaths in the war in Afghanistan. It's as if we had a Newtown school shooting every three weeks, and yet the deaths—mainly on the South and West Sides—are deemed much less newsworthy. Maybe it's because 75% of the victims are African-American and 20% are Latino. They're mostly young people, counted among the 25% of students that Mayor Rahm Emanuel says will never amount to anything. The police see the youth in these neighborhoods as suspects first and foremost, huge numbers of them get pushed into the criminal justice system. To many residents of majority-white neighborhoods of the North and Northwest Sides, **these neighborhoods are so remote that the murders may as well be taking place on another planet.**

People at the rally did not claim to have answers to this situation, but it was one more expression of the deep discontent simmering in much of Chicago. We reject the authorities' pretense of doing something about the shocking violence while in reality they are unwilling to contemplate any change deep enough to uproot it.

—King on King marchers

them, but they can't. It's very sad. The last photograph she has of him is from 1995.



San Francisco members of the Pelican Bay Hunger Strike Support Coalition welcome family members on their way to Pelican Bay on Dec. 7, 2012

There are 55 people on the bus, including many children, the youngest is 11 months old. We have several teens, who have not seen their dads in years. They are not resentful, just hopeful, glad to see their dads. The kids are being so incredibly good. It's humbling how grateful they are.

Isaac (nine years old): I am very excited about

seeing my dad. I am happy about it. We have not seen him for seven years, ever since he's been sent up there. My father sent me a drawing. It's of the father from *Finding Nemo* and a big shark.

Another family member: I'm loving the trip. I've never been to San Francisco. It's a long ride from Glendale. My five-year-old son has never been on a bus ride this long.

A family member: My son does not know I am coming. It will be a surprise. He's been there for 17 years. He's already served his sentence, he was supposed to be out, but they are keeping him. They did not want to let him out of the SHU. It's good to organize these trips. I have another son in Tehachapi whom I'd like to see.

* * *

CFASC is planning fundraisers to organize more trips like this one, as well as actions in support of a renewed hunger strike, which may come about on July 8, 2013, since CDC has not lived up to the agreements they made during the last strike. You can send a contribution to CFASC c/o PBHS, 1904 Franklin St. #507, Oakland, CA 94612.

—Urszula Wislanka

"We want to be validated as human"



News & Letters reports from the Pelican Bay State Prison hunger strike, 2011

From the belly of the beast: Pelican Bay prisoners speak

Send \$3 per copy, \$5 to pay for one also for a prisoner, to News & Letters

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

The newly signed law that would have protected all California Queer youth from "ex-gay" therapies and therapies to change gender expression has been suspended. Federal Appeals Court judges ruled that there must be a full review of the legality of the Bill (SB 1172). The therapists who administer "ex-gay" therapies claim the law violates their freedom of religion.

* * *

Kolkata, India—Intersex woman Pinki Pramanik, the former Asian Games gold medalist in women's track and field, was arrested for rape, accused by her former lover, and imprisoned in a male ward because of test results showing that she has both X and Y chromosomes. Medical personnel on the investigating panel said Pramanik's gender is not necessarily male based solely on those tests. The panel diagnosed Pramanik with disorders of sex development (DSD). The soon-to-be-published fifth edition of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) defines DSD as the set of traits where chromosomes, gonads, and/or genitals are both female and male or atypical for either. This is highly controversial, in part because DSD is listed as a disorder. The Intersex community demands full human rights, normalization, that DSD be eliminated from the DSM, and control over their own bodies from birth.

* * *

Kiev, Ukraine—On Human Rights Day, Dec. 10, GLBT rights supporters protested Ukraine's Draft Law 8711, which bans any television or radio programs, movies, writings, and any other media that "promotes" homosexuality. Anyone violating that law could face fines or imprisonment of up to five years. Members of the homophobic Svoboda Party tried to stop the protest, physically assaulting some of the protesters. Nevertheless, the protest went on.

Why 'green on blue' attacks?

London, England—Richard Walker was described by family as a "proud, patriotic man." No doubt believing Britain's role in Afghanistan as vital to the curtailment of terrorism, Walker deployed to the war-torn country as part of the 28 Engineer Regiment. His death on Jan. 7 in the latest shootout between Coalition forces and a rogue Afghan Army soldier points, however, to increasing resistance to NATO's ongoing presence.

So-called "green on blue" attacks involving Afghan state forces turning on their NATO allies accounted for a full 25% of British casualties in 2012 alone. Whilst the Taliban claim responsibility for the majority, this latest assault was carried out by a soldier with no apparent ties to the insurgent fighting force.

Some analysts have pointed to cultural and religious differences between Afghan soldiers and their Coalition counterparts as fueling the phenomena of Afghan soldiers, with no ties to the Taliban, firing on Western troops. According to NATO officers, around 90% of insider attacks are directly due to cultural friction, which is partly behind the decision of the Afghan National Army to supply a brochure to its troops on how to deal with their NATO counterparts. This brochure, whilst seemingly aimed at stimulating tolerance in the ranks, borders on the surreal, for example, warning recruits that Western soldiers have a habit of blowing their noses as a matter of routine and that such a habit should not be considered "an offence or insult."

Considering that such attacks have increased the longer NATO troops remain in Afghanistan, it's been suggested that many Afghans are simply reacting violently to continued foreign interference, as opposed to any onset of cultural intolerance or desire to see the Taliban return to power.

According to sources inside Afghanistan, the brutality of Western troops in their dealings with the native population is itself a cause for violence. The continuation of night raids aimed at uncovering Taliban sympathizers and members, has led to a great many civilians being accosted, abused and sometimes killed in their own homes. According to one source, over 15,000 Afghans were killed during such raids in a ten month period between 2010-2011.

Human rights organizations have also pointed to NATO's inability to curtail civilian casualties. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) in 2010, Coalition authorities have refused to publicly acknowledge a rising number of non-combatant deaths. In one incident involving an air strike in Herat province, U.S. commanders persistently ignored third party investigations, including one by the Afghan government, pointing to a drastically greater number of civilian deaths than originally admitted. An initial U.S. estimate claimed that five to seven civilian fatalities had been caused; the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission claimed the figure was more likely 70 to 90.

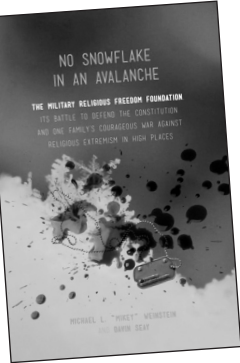
In a similar incident in Farah province in 2009 the U.S. military dismissed UN claims that an air and ground attack had killed roughly 80 civilians, downplaying the number of casualties. It was only weeks later, under mounting pressure from civilian institutions, that the military admitted that around 26 civilians had in fact been killed.

Changes in the operational guidelines of NATO forces, initially welcomed by HRW, failed to halt the toll on civilian life. Over 1,500 Afghans, many of them non-combatants, were killed in 2010 and 2011 in night raids. There was a corresponding rise in green on blue assaults: 16 for 2011 and 44 for 2012. In 2009-2010 five similar attacks took place, up from just two in 2008, which suggests a definite link between civilian casualties and attacks on NATO troops.

Whilst elements of the bourgeois media have a tendency to present the conflict as a clash of good against evil, with brave western soldiers facing off against a terrorist enemy, the truth appears more complex. Continuing civilian casualties, coupled with outrages such as the notorious "kill team" case of 2011—where a squad of U.S. soldiers was found to have habitually murdered native Afghans and taken body parts of the deceased as "trophies"—can only inflame further resentment. The death of Richard Walker, which has so shocked the British military establishment, is symptomatic of the continuing outrage felt by a population that has long been denied any opportunity to decide its own destiny.

—Dan Read

Review of *No Snowflake in an Avalanche*



No Snowflake in an Avalanche, by Michael L. "Mikey" Weinstein and Davin Seay (Vireo, 2012).

An extraordinary organization arose to combat an extraordinary threat. Lawyer Mikey Weinstein was a graduate of the Air Force Academy, located in the religious Right territory of Colorado Springs, Colo. In 2004, his son Casey, a freshman at the Academy, told him he was receiving constant anti-Semitic threats from other cadets and that this behavior was encouraged by the fundamentalist Christian proselytizing as well as programs, films and lectures promoted by the officers. The religious Right had taken control of the Academy to mold future military and political leaders.

When Weinstein presented a thick file of evidence of this hostile religious climate to the officers in charge, to his surprise, it was ignored. A 19-page paper he wrote broke the scandalous story in the media. The Academy responded as it always would in the future, investigating itself, then issuing a bland statement that the events had been blown out of proportion. Nothing came of a Congressional hearing and a lawsuit.

In December 2005, Weinstein launched the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF), a civil rights organization "dedicated to ensuring that all members of the United States Armed Forces fully receive the Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom to which they and all Americans are entitled by virtue of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment."

The MRFF receives about a hundred requests for legal representation per week and has about six cases running simultaneously. In spite of religious Right propaganda that the MRFF is "anti-Christian," 96% of their clients are Christians, although not deemed devout enough by fundamentalists. The organization also fights for atheists and members of minority religions. They promise their clients "Anonymity, Action, Results, and Protection" because, even for military people, it takes enormous courage to brave the threats to their lives and careers.

Weinstein also lectures extensively where he places each individual case in its larger context. MRFF maintains a website with news items and a research database.

MRFF has prevented religious Right speakers, who depict all forms of Islam as an evil force engaged in a cosmic battle with "good" fundamentalist Christianity, from lecturing to military audiences. The religious Right's promotion of the war in the Middle East as a crusade against Islam is a serious national security risk which has only served as propaganda for fundamentalist Muslim terrorists. MRFF has exposed the military's use of rifle scopes engraved with Bible verses. It has also exposed Bible references and the citation of a Nazi war criminal as a moral authority in the training material for nuclear launch officers at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

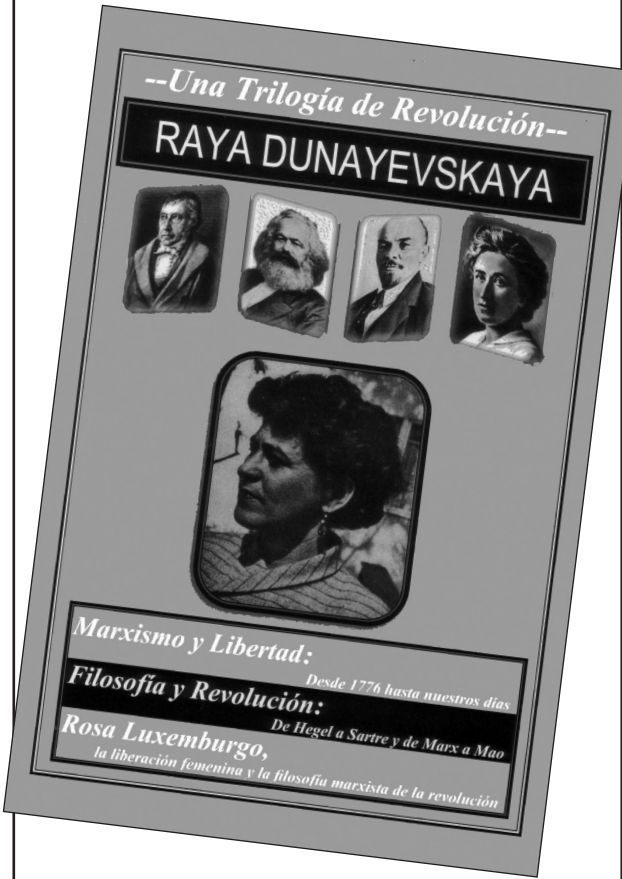
The guiding philosophy of the religious Right is Dominionism, the plan to put fundamentalist Christians in control of the seven "mountains" of culture: business, government, media, arts and entertainment, education, family, and religion (including mainstream Christian churches). Leah Burton, an expert on Dominionism and a member of MRFF's Board of Directors, says the military could be considered an eighth "mountain." What Weinstein and his multi-talented allies have done to protect the rank-and-file military, needs to be done to protect other aspects of society.

MRFF is a model of how to do this. The immense stress of death threats and financial hardship faced by Weinstein's family and clients may be lessened when more people from all walks of life and with diverse talents organize using his strategies and develop his persistence and determination.

—Adele

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by Suzanne Rose

England—Church of England leaders want doctors to have the right to withhold treatment from disabled newborn babies in "exceptional circumstances," even though it will "certainly result in death." The church states that the principle of "justice" inevitably means that the potential cost of long term healthcare and education in the saving of other lives has to be considered. This proposal has angered many who are against the Church's position on abortion. As one woman stated, "So I shouldn't have an abortion if tests show my fetus has a disabling condition, but it's OK to let it die once it is born?"

* * *

Dublin, Ireland—Nearly 2,000 protesters marched to the gates of the Dáil protesting cuts to services for those with disabilities. Members of the Disability Rights Coalition are demanding their rights, not charity. They are asking for a new law to replace the 1871 Lunacy Act, a collection of laws governing people with intellectual and other disabilities. "It's past time for the word 'lunacy' to be dropped from the books," stated one activist. People with disabilities have suffered budget cuts of 13.7% since 2008.

* * *

Guatemala City, Guatemala—Disability Rights International (DRI) has documented life-threatening abuses against children and adults at Federico Mora Hospital, a psychiatric facility. The incidents of trafficking of women for sex and other incidents of physical and sexual abuse are so high that newly admitted minors are kept in isolation cells and adult women are locked in wards. Deaths in isolation rooms are common. People die from treatable infections because they are denied medical care. The armed guards are known to be the worst perpetrators of the abuse and violence.

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Counter-revolution and Arab Spring

continued from p. 1

The Muslim Brotherhood, with its decades of organization, presented itself as the logical candidate for the job. They had a history of opposition to Mubarak's regime, but at the same time were a million miles from the life experience of the new generation of revolutionaries. They were latecomers to the streets and Square. When they did appear, it was under pressure of events, and from the youth in their own ranks. It was inevitable that they would continue Mubarak's anti-worker policies.

The lived experience of the women workers at Muhallah al-Kubra, or the youth who were inspired by their example, is not only beyond the Muslim Brotherhood's understanding, but represents its opposite—a struggle against the dictates of capital itself. This is the red thread that runs from Muhallah in 2008, through Tahrir Square's assertion of new human relations, to the anti-austerity Occupations in Europe. A movement so deep and international represents humanity's effort to grasp its own essence, the drive to freedom and self-determination, in concrete historic terms.

This is the truth of the Arab Spring: It was the universalizing of the struggle against capitalism that expressed itself as the blazing, limitless humanism of Tahrir Square and beyond. This is why every effort to reduce such a world-historic event to mere political terms ends up like trying to catch mercury in one's fingers.

Unfortunately, too often would-be revolutionaries have mistaken reactionary forces like the Muslim Brotherhood for allies against U.S. imperialism, as in the 2002-2008 international Cairo Anti-war Conferences. These rightly called for opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq, but said nothing about the oppressive nature of Iraq's Baathist state or the need for a revolution there.

SELF-DETERMINATION VS. GENOCIDE

The Syrian Revolution has actually faced the same obstacles as in Egypt, but in more extreme form. There capital has asserted its rule through genocide, with over 60,000 dead and millions more forced to flee. As this is being written, word comes of the bombing of Aleppo University, in which over 80 students have been killed and hundreds more wounded. Students have protested there, despite being under the control of the regime. This massacre is Assad's ongoing message to the peaceful revolutionaries.

Assad's Baathist dictatorship has long served the interests of Saudi Arabia's theocracy, Iran's counter-revolutionary regime, and Israel's occupation of Palestinian land, whatever its rhetorical relations with those states. It has served Russian imperialism, in both its Communist and post-Communist forms. And it has well served U.S. imperialism as a partner in war and torture. The peaceful Syrian uprising faced, from the start, the fully armed might of a vicious and unprincipled fascist state. There, as Marx once put it, "no kind of bondage could be shattered without every kind of bondage being shattered."

In the face of the world's (at best) indifference, Syrian revolutionaries have practically accomplished miracles. They have defended themselves. They have driven Assad to the wall and managed to free much of Syria from his rule. In response, today, not only have the few weapons supplied to the Syrian people's struggle begun to dry up, but the litany in almost every article the bourgeois press publishes would have al-Qaeda as a leading force in the anti-Assad struggle. This despite the fact that most of the Syrian rebel fighters are working-class people defending their neighborhoods and families.

Al-Qaeda in fact opposed the Arab Spring from the start, and it has no affinity for the values of dignity, equal rights, and democratic practice the millions of protesters shared. Far from turning over their revolution to al-Qaeda, the Syrian people, especially in the areas liberated from Assad's forces, continue to debate and organize their own lives and futures. This attitude also disregards the contributions of revolutionary women like Rania Kisar, who describes Syrian women thus: "They're spreading the ideology. They're helping the wounded. They're teaching children. They are leading the relief aid. We do it for freedom and equality."

'HELL OR A POLITICAL PROCESS'

The only future envisaged by the world powers is a future in the image of their own desires, not the people's—either a compromise with Assad, or a division of the country along sectarian lines. These projections, on the part of the world's most powerful states, amount to open counter-revolutionary threats. UN-Arab League envoy Lakhdar Brahimi poses the alternatives as "hell or a political process." Clearly the powers he represents have disallowed a revolutionary victory.

Turkey has cut back its support for the revolution as it considers the possible effects of a free Kurdish territory in Syria. Israel threatens simply to build another border wall. Egypt uses the crisis to bargain with Iran.

In Syria, the counter-revolution from without and from within have joined hands, in even more insidious and violent ways than in Egypt. The same state powers that use religious ideology to impose capital's rule in Egypt, turn right around and use the threat of religious ideology to pretend that they are powerless to aid the Syrian people. The bourgeois press bears witness. All the laws of men and gods tie their hands. These are the intellectual virtuosos of unfreedom!

Here are the limits of life under capitalism. As Marx pointed out in *Capital*, this ultimate violence in its own defense is something inherent in the commodity form itself. The genocide and slavery with which capitalist society was built don't

disappear into thin air, but can reappear at the terminal points of capital's existence, when crisis and human struggle—revolution—pose a fundamental challenge to capital's rule.

THE ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARIES

"We have been living this lie altogether too long. State-capitalism has reincarnated both Religion and Science as moves away from real human needs and new human relations. The turning of the clock backward must be stopped and will be stopped when we stop separating the philosophy of revolution from social revolution."

—Raya Dunayevskaya
Crossroads of History

In both Egypt and Syria the role of revolutionary ideas is now vital. Morsi represents the face of world capitalism to the Egyptian workers, but his coming to power was also aided by the blind spots and misconceptions among revolutionaries. Too many Leftists failed to develop a critique of the Muslim Brotherhood, presuming that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." That attitude not only has caused confusion among Egyptian revolutionaries, but left many of them ill-prepared to see their own revolution as a world phenomenon.

It would be equally an illusion to imagine a fundamental conflict of interest between the Egyptian military, still a pillar of reaction, and the Muslim Brotherhood. They have known each other, intimately, for decades and wouldn't be together if they had fundamental conflicts.

In Syria it is literally a life-and-death matter to clarify the revolution's aims. The profound internationalism of Arab Spring can still be a powerful revolutionary force, both in breaking down the barriers of sectarianism (which have been deliberately exacerbated by Assad) and in finding allies among the oppressed masses in Iran, the Assad regime's most active supporter. The goal of human self-determination can't be subjected to state power rivalries. That goal applies equally to Kurds, Bahrainis, Palestinians, Yezidis, Israelis and Iranians. Women and men.

People in the liberated areas of Syria are, even now, struggling over the shape of the future—asking the question, what kind of society should we create from this revolution? They are under attack by all the world's oppressive powers. At such a moment, silence from "revolutionaries" would be disgraceful—far more so than the expected hypocries of the rulers.

The Arab Spring shows that world-historic freedom struggles have a necessary philosophic content. As Raya Dunayevskaya wrote of the 1979 Iranian revolution, "What is needed is the working out of a theory that would never again separate itself from the actuality, any more than the actuality can be separated from theory." From the moment the Arab Spring began in 2010, these revolutions have necessitated a recreation of Marx's philosophy of revolution in permanence for our time. If not now—when?



Dar Al-Shifa hospital, Syria, (at the right of the frame) has been bombed and shelled more than 20 times. It is now a symbol of resistance.

Hot and homeless

Chicago—Anyone who has lived through a homeless winter on the streets of a Midwestern city knows the value of a warm night. It means you die a little less. Maybe get to stay out of a shelter, or avoid the humiliation of the Mission. Maybe talk with a friend in peace.

We've had a lot more of those warm nights lately—with global warming. Sixty degrees in January? That's crazy. It can almost feel like what they call charity.

But there's one thing a lot of us know. Things can begin to fall apart on you slowly. Without you noticing. But then it all goes to hell real fast. That happens with homes. It's how you lose them. It's happening now to the whole society, to the world we live in. These warm nights are nice, but they're going to become more Katrinas and Sandys and things that are even worse.

And you know what? From what I've seen, I expect this society to do just about as much to save itself as it does for the "bums," for the homeless kids in Boystown, for the old woman on the train hiding her face.

You see, they talk about charity. That's supposed to mean love for your fellow human beings. But it doesn't amount to much down at the bottom. I'd like to see that change so that there can be a future past a few warm nights—but the view from here doesn't look good.

Anyway, it's a warm night. Thanks for chatting.
—A watcher

Monsters of the Market

Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires, and Global Capitalism by David McNally (Haymarket Books, Chicago, July 2012).

"The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as 'a monstrous accumulation of commodities...'" Thus Marx states the theme of his magnum opus in the very first sentence: that capitalism is a real horror show.

Of course, the German word *ungeheune* is usually translated as "immense," which, as David McNally points out, fails to capture the full import of Marx's formulation.

Das Kapital as a gothic novel? In Chapter two of *Monsters of the Market*, titled "Marx's Monsters: Vampire-Capital and the Nightmare-World of Late Capitalism," McNally makes the case for *Capital* as a work of imaginative literature.

He shows that an Indigenous writer of the Americas, Leslie Marmon Silko, author of *Almanac of the Dead*, reads Marx as a great storyteller.

THE HORRIFYING LOSS OF SUBJECTIVITY

Mary Godwin Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a monster created by man, which turns to destroy man. It is a critique of science which arose with capitalism. William Blake, too, writes about grave robbers, those who provided bodies for surgeons to study. Many a horror movie plot is based on wanton killings of people to provide bodies for anatomy class. McNally stops just short of naming modern science itself as a monster, the Siamese twin of capitalism.

The use of horrifying words to describe capitalism's devastation was widespread during the Great Depression, when "zombie banks," for instance, was a popular term. The word "zombie" comes from Haiti, where zombies were the living dead working the sugar cane fields. What they knew they lacked, and wanted to get from the living, were brains. The Haitian Revolution challenged the entirely passive perception of the laborer, it became the mob intending to eat the rich.

Horror movies frequently show people losing their will, being turned into objects manipulated by others. It is an expression of a loss of subjectivity, not just a loss of control of your body or even mind.

THE MONSTER IS CAPITALISM

McNally compares Marx to a modern Van Helsing, the mighty vampire slayer. Marx tracks the monsters of capitalism, for example factories, in which torture in real life surpasses Dante's imagination of the inferno. He recites the crimes of capitalists and colonialists against children, against Indigenous people from all over the world. McNally quotes Silko noting that Marx was the only white man to call those of his own race "vampires."

McNally recounts the story of Europeans in Africa, who could not understand why the Africans would not sell a statue significant to them. The Europeans called this a fetish. What they can't understand, they call "primitive." Marx shows that commodities are much more of a fetish, more profoundly rooted in human relations as they exist under capitalism masquerading as "natural," "unchanging" and "objective."

In *Capital*, Marx is inventing a new language to illustrate his conceptual scheme. It is a literary masterpiece, weaving in horrors to shake up the reader into rejecting what they grew up knowing as normal: the selling of your own ability to labor, your own life-producing substance, as an article of commerce.

—Lew Finzel

NEWS & LETTERS

VOL.58/NO. 1

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2013

News & Letters (ISSN 0028-8969) is published bi-monthly. Subscriptions are \$5 a year (bulk order of 5 or more, 25c each) from News & Letters, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Telephone 312-431-8242, Fax 312-431-8252. Periodical postage paid at Chicago, Illinois. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to News & Letters, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Articles may be reprinted verbatim if credited to "News & Letters."

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Olga Domanski, Franklin Dmitryev, Co-National Organizers, News and Letters Committees. Terry Moon, Managing Editor. Felix Martin, Labor Editor (1983-1999), John Alan, National Editorial Board Member Emeritus (2008-2011).

News & Letters is printed in a union shop.

News & Letters is indexed by Alternative Press Index.

ALLIED PRINTERS

TRADE UNION COUNCIL

CHICAGO, IL

457

Teachers and parents talk education

Editor's note: Below we print excerpts from the News and Letters Committees panel discussion of teachers and education activists on the September strike by members of the Chicago Teachers Union. Daily mass demonstrations and solidarity from teachers and city residents extracted some concessions from the previously intransigent Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

Chicago—While there are many similarities from one district to another on education issues such as salary, medical benefits, or class size, there are also many differences: poverty levels, linguistic differences which might necessitate bilingual classes, violence in the area, the tax base and so on. There is no one-size-fits-all analysis of the crisis in education today.

Over 70% of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) ratified the current contract, which according to many experts isn't that great. They mainly got an increase in salary. What was their other great success, according to CTU President Karen Lewis? That they actually had textbooks available the first day of school. How insane is that?

Schools have become, more and more, the only home many children know. What were Chicago teachers saying leading up to the strike? That they were concerned children weren't going to be receiving breakfast and lunch in the schools. Those are, in many instances, the only regular meals some children have.

The local school is probably the safest thing around in many neighborhoods, despite many problems. There is a structure, and children need structure. There is a routine that can be counted on. Children need that, too. So many families are in a constant state of chaos and dysfunction because of the poverty, homelessness and violence caused by the economic chaos we live under.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel is proud of saying that students now have a longer school day. But one teacher put it very succinctly: "What difference does it make to keep them in school longer if you've got a building that's falling apart, no air conditioning, no heat in winter, no working computers, no library books, class sizes over 45 students?"

—Erica Rae, K-12 teacher

The unfolding crisis in education has its roots in the 1970s, in the economic, social and political crisis. The ruling class was determined to solve that crisis at the expense of the working class and what many would consider the middle class, as well as the poor.

I would encourage everyone to read a very thoughtful memorandum written for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce by Lewis Powell before he was on the Supreme Court. He was very clear, very strategic and well organized—a model of class consciousness. He argued that the institutions of capitalism were under attack by the women's movement, which was challenging male domination; the civil rights movement; the anti-war movement which had evolved into an anti-imperialist movement; the radicalization of sections of the working class, including wildcat strikes.

His argument was that the ruling class needed to change the discourse. That's the birth of the modern think tanks. They had their think tanks write the laws to re-establish ruling class domination. From the economic crisis and mass layoffs evolved open unionbusting under President Ronald Reagan—but the plans were drawn up under President Jimmy Carter. This was a bi-partisan effort.

For example, former Vice-President Al Gore was head of a committee that specialized in privatizing the federal government. My union, AFSCME, bragged in its literature about participating in this. They had privatized over 350,000 full-time federal jobs. We are seeing this now in education with a national movement basically to destroy the teachers' unions. After having gutted most of the private sector unions, with the collaboration of most of the top union leadership, they are moving on to the public sector unions—of which teachers are the largest.

They are turning everything that's possible into a commodity. Charter schools can be run at a profit. They began as vehicles of teachers' unions, to have experimentation in different teaching methods. They were taken over by investment bankers and others who saw money-making opportunities.

—Earl S., retired teacher

The content of this attack on public education is not simply a question of wages. It's about shrinking the

size of public schools in this society. It is about writing off a huge section of the working class.

I spent my last two years as a teacher in a closing, failing high school. We watched them take the computers out of our rooms and move them to the charter school in the same building.

If we are ever going to organize a strike over the conditions that would make teaching possible, we should demand massive public housing programs, social workers in schools, and social services for all the things students need; a shorter work week so parents can be home and support kids; decent healthcare; all the other conditions that make it possible for children to learn.

There are lab schools with five or seven full-time art teachers. These are the schools that Mayor Emanuel's kids go to. They have a library, they have physical education. Do you have those in the public schools?

Then there are the bells and whistles: cultural opportunities, zoos, summer camps, trips, overseas vacations. Home libraries for every kid. You want to help my kids perform? Give me the control over all the things that affect their ability to learn.

And then when you tell me the teachers are asking for too much, be really glad that the teachers are so patient!

—Tina B., retired teacher

I'm not a union member. I'm not in the Chicago Teachers Union, although I'm a facilitator of education in my children's lives. I have four kids who have been part of the Chicago public school system.

Everyone took notice of the teachers' strike, and was happy to see the little guys standing up against the giant, saying, "I'm not going to take this anymore." It was very exciting to have my kids out there seeing thousands and thousands of red shirts, the solidarity and spirit of the workers. My kids got a lot of education out there on the picket line with me doing the commentary.

There needs to be more communication between the teachers and the parents. I knew there was a strike coming, but that's from working in the Occupy movement and with the solidarity campaign. For the parents of the average kid, this came as a surprise.

Parents count on schools to feed children, educate them, shelter them. For that to be removed for a week and a half got a lot of parents' attention. A lot of them said, dang, we didn't know it was so bad for teachers.

Teachers are unique. They aren't plumbers or carpenters, because the products are our children. You have to take special consideration when striking. Children and parents should be at the negotiating table. There should be an intentional commitment of the teachers' union to work with the parents. It would be great to have teachers support a student-led action.

I haven't seen thousands of teachers protest the violence in the streets, but it would be very good to see that.

—Marissa B., Black mother, Occupy the Southside activist

Chalking charges dismissed!



Chicago—At an Oct. 9 protest at the Federal Building, a Homeland Security officer had Occupy activist Marissa Brown charged with property destruction for writing political messages on the premises with chalk. (See "Chalking a felony?" in Nov.-Dec. 2012 *N&L*.) At her trial on Dec. 17, about 40 supporters in the courtroom rose to their feet in solidarity. Judge Calabrese dismissed the charges, denying the prosecution's motion to continue the trial. Brown told *N&L*:

"I did chalk on the Federal Plaza, and I'm proud of it! When the complaining witness is the Department of Homeland Security, you get scared. The judge questioned how hurtful chalking could be. The judge realized that it's ludicrous to waste the taxpayer's money to prosecute a mother of four on a felony charge of chalking. I'm really looking forward to doing more chalking and more actions. It was amazing when everyone stood up in the courtroom. News and Letters Committees was there, Occupy Chicago, Occupy El Barrio, Occupy the Southside, the LGBT Network, First Unitarian Church, and more."

—Courtroom supporter

Fake Burmese reforms

When highly lauded Burmese human rights activist Aung San Suu Kyi doubted whether the Rohingya Muslims really belong in Burma, the incipient racism and ethnic chauvinism echoed personally. I consider myself, my family and many other ethnic minorities to be exiles, having fled persecution in Burma during the post-colonial era of national independence movements. In Burma, we were declared a marginal Other, who did not belong, "foreigners" in our own birthplace.

In Burma, General Ne Win had declared his junta in 1962 to be a "caretaker" government. But they never left. The generals are still in charge.

PRETENDERS OF DEMOCRATIC REFORM

It is these pretenders who are now supposedly spearheading "democratic reforms," sadly with validations from pro-democracy activists and incipient narrow nationalists like San Suu Kyi, as well as the U.S. administration. They give the junta legitimacy.

Burmese junta butchers changed their policies in the face of ongoing revolts from their own masses. Dictators don't embrace "reform" and "democracy" because they love those ideas. They are attempting to appropriate political trends, and preserve themselves.

On Nov. 19 President Obama spent about 24 hours in Burma. It was the first time a U.S. President has visited Burma. He did so in the throes of racial apartheid and political persecutions. It is significant that the first U.S. president to visit Burma is Black. Millions of Burmese came out to greet Obama. That would not have happened if, say, the British Prime Minister paid a visit. We have too many bad memories of the Brits.

I think Obama himself recognized the simultaneously historic and contradictory nature of his trip. He took pains to almost apologize, saying it wasn't to validate the regime but to help move forward the beginnings of reforms.

As soon as he left Suu Kyi's side, the junta resumed their repression of Burmese villagers. At the Letpadaung copper mine in central Burma, 70 Buddhist monks and five lay persons were arrested and injured at a peaceful protest. The mine is a joint venture between China's Wanbao Copper Mining Ltd. and the military-owned Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings, Ltd.

VILLAGERS FIGHT CONTAMINATION

For years villagers have had health problems from air, soil and water contamination they believe are the results of mining. Many at the old mine sites allege their land was confiscated without compensation.

More than 7,800 acres of land have been seized from 26 villages under the shadow of the Letpadaung mountain range since last year to make way for the Chinese-backed project. Villagers demand its closure, citing environmental destruction and illegal land confiscation. A pre-dawn raid left dozens of unarmed demonstrators seriously injured. Security forces used water cannons, tear gas and smoke bombs to clear protesters from another copper mine in northwestern Burma.

The crackdown showed that the government, which claims to have turned over a new leaf, is only protecting its own interests and those of foreign investors. In Kachin State in northern Burma, an estimated 75,000 people have been displaced by the Taping River dam projects. A minister attached to the Burmese President's Office publicly admitted, "We're afraid of China....If China asks for compensation, the Myitsone Dam shutdown would cost us \$3 billion dollars."

In the 1970s, fear of China, the Communist imperialist behemoth in the north, triggered irrational fear of the ethnic Chinese within Burma and a rampage of ethnic cleansing. Fear-mongering and ethnic chauvinism are being stoked again, now against the Rohingya Muslim minorities along the southern coast in an effort to displace them.

Since Obama's visit, the military has intensified its war against the oppressed Kachin minority and their demand for autonomy. There is heavy fighting, with reports of grave human rights abuses. Though activists in Rangoon have urged the government to stop its war on the Kachins, Aung Sung Suu Kyi has been silent.

National movements for democracy cannot stop at any halfway houses if the aspirations of the masses are to be achieved.

—Htun Lin

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WORLD IN VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

In the remarkable documentary film, *La Toma* (2012), Afro-Colombian woman activist Francia Marquez Mina is threatened by government forces and forced to spend each night sleeping in a different place for her safety. (See "Afro-Colombians Throw Off Shackles," Nov.-Dec. 2012 *N&L*.) She has described the experience of people in her community this way: "We've been able to take measures for self-protection. Information isn't shared with strangers when they come asking."

Silence may be the oldest recourse of oppressed communities. A new study of Afro-Colombian women called "Defeating Invisibility" represents a bridge out of silence.

It is compiled as part of the Afro-Colombian Women Human Rights Defenders Project being developed by the Black Communities' Process. Described as an "exercise in hope," the study was based upon "women's testimonies collected in workshops and activities intended to reconstruct memory and stimulate thinking" in order to "shed light on the structural violations of human rights faced by Afro-descendant women."

AFRO-COLOMBIANS MARGINALIZED

The reality of racism, and the rhetoric that covers it, have contributed to the invisibility of Afro-Colombians. Politicians have held that the lands where Black people lived could produce nothing of value. This

France in Mali

The long-simmering situation has exploded. French troops have begun attacking fundamentalist militias in northern Mali. It remains to be seen how effective French and African forces will be against the militias. Certainly many people want to be rid of the al-Qaeda-linked groups that have attacked women, destroyed historic Sufi Muslim shrines in Timbuktu, outlawed music, and inflicted cruel punishment on petty thieves. The Tuareg independence movement has been pushed aside by these larger military forces.

The inhumanity embodied by the fundamentalist "religious" ideology is expressed in their attacks on Mali's beautiful, profound and Islamic cultural heritage. This is why there are Malians celebrating the French troops, even as many Afghan civilians celebrated the fall of the Taliban in 2002.

The seizure of neighboring Algeria's Ain Anemas natural gas field, with many hostages taken, indicates the seriousness of the crisis. Dozens of hostages have been killed as Algerian troops stand off with fundamentalists. The seizure was allegedly in retaliation for Algeria granting France the right to use its airspace for attacks in Mali, but also points to the roots of Mali's crisis in the Algerian civil war of the 1990s.

Between the probably temporary relief at French intervention and the anti-human threat of fundamentalism, Malian society remains unstable.

Defeating invisibility

has continued right through to discussions of the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. To the contrary, for Afro-Colombians the land has been where they escaped enslavement, mined gold from the streams, and grew crops—the means to freedom and self-determination.

In the racist context of capitalist development, Black women have been hard hit. In the context of ongoing civil war, they have been attacked by both sides.

As the study reports, "Women have been squashed and assaulted in our own territory, and everywhere, by different armed groups legal and illegal, who kidnap us, kill us, rape us and humiliate us." When women make efforts to hold their communities together, they become targets for attack as human rights defenders. "The precarious-

ness of Afro-descendant women is reflected in their life expectancy, which is 11 years less than that of the mestizo or white woman and 2.1 years less compared to men of African descent. Mortality rates of Afro-descendant children are another tragedy....

"In the public sphere, the manifestations of violence against women are expressed through oppressive forms such as poverty, lack of access to education, health and sexual safety...internal displacement, and sexual violence perpetrated by armed actors to exert control and political persecution. The violence in the private sphere manifests mostly through physical and sexual violence perpetrated by emotional partners, members of the family or those close to it, or by armed actors. Sexual violence as an instrument of war has created patterns of 'naturalization' of violence against Afro-descendant women...."

A VOICE AT THE TABLE?

In articulating the problem, the women of the Black Communities' Process are also critiquing the dehumanization now common to both the multinational corporations and the lost revolution of the FARC guerrilleros. Colombia's capitalist exploitation and distorted development can't be separated from the racist prison-industrial complex in the U.S.

One might speculate that Colombia's recent history could have been very different if would-be revolutionaries had started from the consciousness of the most oppressed, the Afro-Colombians and Indigenous peoples—not only because they would have learned the jungles and mountains are more than the terrain of guerrilla war, but because the narrative of these communities' histories is the story of resistance to the growth of capitalism in the Western hemisphere, and in the world. The current struggle against international mining companies, agribusiness, and other exploiters is the latest chapter of this history.

As peace talks proceed between the FARC and Colombian government, it is important to make sure that—this time—the voices of the most oppressed people are heard.

Contact charominarojas@gmail.com for a digital copy of "Defeating Invisibility."



Afro-Colombian women make their voices heard.

Maria Claudia

Massacre in Quetta

Over 100 people were killed and 150 injured in Quetta, Pakistan, in bombings on Jan. 12. The targets were Shi'a Muslims, mainly from the Hazara minority. The terrorist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed credit. This group, allied with the Afghan Taliban, has a long history of attacks on Shi'a.

The latest bombing sparked protests by the Shi'a community. Hundreds occupied the streets of Quetta, refusing to bury the victims' bodies for days, demanding more protection from the police and military—although those agencies often have ties to such terror groups.

Quetta is in Balochistan province, which has been the scene of a dirty war in which independence activists have been targeted for assassination, with bodies being found dumped in rural areas on a regular basis.

Zapatistas' new era

Dec. 21, 2012, was a special date in the Mayan calendar—the end of an era and the beginning of a new historic cycle. For the Zapatistas of Chiapas in southern Mexico, it signaled a new moment of the movement. Some 40,000 Zapatistas from the autonomous Indigenous communities in resistance marched through the five cities where the rebellion began Jan. 1, 1994.

They came without arms, without talking, wearing their masks. Their silence was deafening. To the Mexican government—federal, state, local—their presence in the tens of thousands revealed the lie of the whispers, rumors and hopes of the officials and their corrupt parties, that the Zapatistas had "disappeared." Their lie lacked any real effect on the Indigenous peoples in Chiapas. To the Mexican news media—who had ignored them, lied about them, and failed to print the news of what has actually happened in Chiapas—the Zapatistas demonstrated their powerful presence.

Perhaps most importantly, it was a signal to the social movements in Mexico and in Latin America—movements that had grown out of the Zapatista rebellion or been inspired by it—that the struggle was not over, but just beginning. Here is how the Zapatistas expressed it in an excerpt from a communiqué signed by Sub-comandante Marcos several days after the march:

We, who never went away, despite what media across the spectrum have been determined to make you believe, resurge as the Indigenous Zapatistas that we are and will be. In these years, we have significantly strengthened and improved our living conditions. Our standard of living is higher than those of the Indigenous communities that support the governments in office, who receive handouts that are squandered on alcohol and useless items.

Our homes have improved without damaging nature by imposing on it roads alien to it. In our communities, the earth that was used to fatten the cattle of ranchers and landlords is now used to produce the maize, beans, and vegetables that brighten our tables. Our work has the double satisfaction of providing us with what we need to live honorably and contributing to the collective growth of our communities.

Our sons and daughters go to a school that teaches them their own history, that of their country and that of the world, as well as the sciences and techniques necessary for them to grow without ceasing to be Indigenous. Indigenous Zapatista women are not sold as commodities....

The communiqué further stated that new initiatives will be undertaken in the coming period.

—Eugene Walker

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

News & Letters was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcat strikes against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signaled a new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. *News & Letters* was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910–1987), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, became Chairwoman of the

National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907–83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya's works, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* (1958), *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973), and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa.

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels. In light of the crises of our nuclearly armed world, it becomes imperative not only to reject what is, but

to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a new Humanism and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as Marxist-Humanism. This is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*.

Dunayevskaya's philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya's original 1953 philosophic breakthrough

and her final 1987 Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead." We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our *Constitution* states: "It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking. Send for a copy of the *Constitution* of News and Letters Committees.

NEWS & LETTERS

"Human power is its own end"—Karl Marx

Vol. 58 No. 2

MARCH-APRIL 2013

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WORKSHOPTALKS

Some cuts don't heal

by Htun Lin

As Congress's latest self-imposed sequestration crisis makes clear, not all cuts are the same. A campaign slogan of California Nurses' Association (CNA) goes: "Some Cuts Don't Heal."

The looming full launch date of Obamacare in 2014 has the HMO industry imposing cuts, patient care be damned, in a race to the bottom to reduce costs, while competing for new subscribers offered by the Affordable Care Act. Where I work at Kaiser, the HMO carries out its massive cuts with the collaboration of their major union, the Service Employees International (SEIU).

Another union, the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW), supported by the CNA, is now challenging SEIU in an election. NUHW correctly exposes SEIU lies and betrayals, such as secret deals with management to give back hard-earned benefits. But the contest appears to many in the shop to be no more than a competition over who gets our dues.

HMOs like Kaiser (with the help of company unions like SEIU) are distorting Obamacare's cost-cutting language, meant to rein in Medicare fraud and overcharges, to their own ends. They are using this opportunity to cut labor costs and patient care expenditures, while still gouging the privately health-insured and government programs like Medicare.

Steven Brill's Feb. 20 *Time* cover story, "Bitter Pill: Why Medical Bills Are Killing Us," is getting a lot of

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EDITORIAL State of the U.S. wars

The opening of Barack Obama's second term made it clear that, despite all talk of ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is to be no end to the state of permanent war either abroad or at home.

President Obama promises to end the war in Afghanistan after 13 years. But the Afghan people have every right to fear a repeat of what happened after Russia's withdrawal in the early 1990s: no end to war, but an internecine struggle for power among multiple warlords, including the Taliban; and continued exploitation and violence directed at women, youth, workers, and national minorities.

Iraq, where Obama officially declared the war over in 2011, is still suffering from the sectarian and ethnic violence stimulated by the U.S. invasion and occupation. Iraq's chaos and violences provides an example of the kind of "peace and stability" that imperialism could live with in Afghanistan and Syria, rather than self-determination of the masses.

The administration long ago made clear that it would use the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan, not to reduce the size of the military, but to "pivot" to East Asia, pressuring China. Marines have been deployed in Australia, and 60% of U.S. warships are to be deployed in the Pacific by 2020, further militarizing an already tense region.

China has been increasingly forceful in territorial disputes with several other Asian nations over resource-rich uninhabited islands. Last year its warships confronted warships from both The Philippines and Japan. The latter even scrambled fighter jets. North Korea's resumed nuclear weapons testing added fuel to

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

From India to Egypt to U.S., women fighting for freedom

by Terry Moon

Two recent events have shown the deep and seemingly intractable worldwide oppression of women and, at the same time, revealed women's militancy and determination to change their oppressive reality. First was the vicious gang rape and murder of Jyoti Singh Pandey at the end of the year on a Delhi, India, bus. This was followed by mob sexual attacks on 25 women in Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt, on Jan. 25 at the demonstrations and protests marking the second anniversary of the uprising that overthrew President Hosni Mubarak.

It is not only that these were savage attacks on women in public spaces, it is that they brought to the surface the simmering decades-long anger of women whose lives have been circumscribed—and many destroyed—by male violence. This is a violence that is savagely brutal and unforgiving—one that ranges from disfiguring and blinding acid attacks to 300 men mobbing a woman in Tahrir Square and attacking her so savagely that she had to have a hysterectomy. It is a violence that has nothing to do with desire and everything to do with power.

INDIAN WOMEN'S RADICAL DEMANDS

That women's simmering anger has now boiled over into rage and a determination to transform these inhuman relationships was seen clearly in three recent events. First were the huge and sustained demonstrations in India, where thousands of women and men poured into the streets for weeks on end demanding deep changes not only in the laws, but in society and actual human relationships (see "Rape protests in India," Jan.-Feb. 2013 *News & Letters*).

Tellingly, the reaction by the state and others has been to confine women even more. Curfews for



"The Circle of Hell." The final result. A graffiti painting by Mira and Zeff addressing the sexual harassment at Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt.

The *reason* of Indian women is evident in their critique of the government's response to its hastily called JS Verma Committee's report that recommended changes to India's anti-rape laws. While Indian women's liberation groups were pleased that the new laws would criminalize voyeurism, stalking, disrobing women and acid attacks, they vigorously oppose the death penalty as punishment for rape where the woman dies or is seriously injured. Introducing the death penalty is rightly seen as a retrogressive move.

Furthermore, the government's own commission proposed recognizing marital rape and holding commanding officers accountable for rapes by their subordinates in the armed forces. These recommendations

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Chicagoans rally: Forward on Climate

Chicago—"Hey! Obama! We don't want your climate drama!" we chanted at the Forward on Climate rally here on Feb. 17. There were at least 20 rallies that day, with 40,000 people in Washington, D.C. Most of the 400 here were college students brought out by Chicago Youth Climate Coalition (CYCC).

Foremost was stopping the Keystone XL pipeline. If approved by President Obama, it would carry tar sands oil from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, greatly adding to the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere. Speakers also warned of the dangers of fracking for natural gas, and told of campaigns by students at several Chicago colleges to make their schools divest from oil, coal and gas companies.

These rallies were preceded by civil disobedience on Feb. 13, when 48 people were arrested for handcuffing themselves to the White House fence.

NO! TO TAR SANDS MINING

A key demand was for Obama to deny a permit to the tar sands pipeline. Many protesters were disturbed by the ambivalence of Obama's State of the Union address, noted for his ringing words:

"For the sake of our children and our future, we must do more to combat climate change....We can choose to believe in the overwhelming judgment of science—and act before it's too late."

But not only did his specific proposals amount to far less than what is needed to steer the world away from catastrophic warming, he even boasted in the same speech about increasing fossil fuel production, which drives climate change. He promised, "My administration will keep cutting red tape and speeding up new oil and gas permits." And of course he advocated a "market-based solution," as if capitalism is not a funda-

mental part of the problem.

—Franklin Dmitryev

RALLY PARTICIPANTS SPEAK

I was really disappointed in Obama's remarks about fracking, which we pretend is "natural" gas. I'm a member of CYCC, a coalition of students from around the city. I'm a student at Roosevelt University. At RU we have an organization called Rise, based on building student activist networks. Climate change is connected to economic rights issues, immigration rights issues, anti-poverty issues. Our main goal is to mobilize youth because we really only have a few more years to take serious climate action.

—Dylan

* * *

Today we fight for the ultimate goal for rights to clean air, water, and existence. Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization fought for over ten years on a campaign to close the Fisk coal-fired power plant. With lots of grassroots organizations and widespread partnerships, we won. This is a huge victory. But the two coal plants of Illinois are only representative of the environmental devastation we see all over the world. We can change the world for the better.

—Megan

* * *

I'm a member of Rise and CYCC. If Obama is truly going to address climate change, he cannot rely on fracking. I come from a low-income background. Much of environmental pollution and climate change effects are in low-income, minority-based communities. Those are people who don't necessarily have a voice.

—Gianna

* * *

After reading articles about climate change, I was moved to get active. I didn't know anything about the

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WOMAN & REASON

Left still can't fathom Women's Liberation

by Terry Moon

Women's struggle for freedom has continued to develop into a worldwide movement with revolutionary content (see page 1). Unfortunately, much of the Left seems unable to hear this radical dimension of women's struggles. A recent example is Sharon Smith's essay, "Marxism, feminism and women's liberation" (<http://links.org.au/node/3210>). Smith, a member of the International Socialist Organization (ISO) (USA), has to *at last* and at least give lip service to an undeniable fact: women's liberation has changed the world.

YET ANOTHER POST-MARX MARXIST

Rather than giving us anything new, however, Smith just walks the worn path of post-Marx Marxism: treating Marx and Engels as practically the same person; praising Engels's *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* over anything Marx wrote; reducing Marx's concept of reproduction to bearing children; reducing women's oppression to working-class women's oppression within the working-class family.

She writes as if "understanding the role of the family" takes centuries of struggle, and when we master that we will understand "women's second-class citizenship in society."

Then there is Smith's ludicrous fabrication that "this crude approach" of "reductionism" "does not describe the IS (International Socialist) tradition, which certainly since the 1960s women's liberation movement

Past time to stop rape in South Africa

Grahamstown, South Africa—Thandiswa Qubuda was gang-raped in the early hours of Jan. 20 at the corner of New Town and E Street in Grahamstown. She was 30



South Africans, outraged over another horrible rape and murder, that of Anene Booysen, participated in One Billion Rising on February 14.

years old and the only one surviving in her family. Both her parents had died and she was living with her aunt. She was savagely beaten during the rape, suffered permanent brain damage and eventually died from the beating. The Revered Mzi Dyantyi, family members and the Unemployed People's Movement (UPM) held a prayer and anointment in her hospital ward.

The men that were arrested were granted free bail. The rape case was then dismissed and struck off the role because of the extreme negligence and incompetence of the police. The only charge that is remaining is murder.

Witnesses have been subject to serious intimidation by one of the accused. One has been taken to a place of safety after being threatened with death by one of the accused. Another has had to flee to Johannesburg. And yet the accused were given free bail!

We do not believe that the state is taking the rape and murder of Thandiswa Qubuda seriously. The state holds poor people in contempt. We are just voting fodder to them. We are not human beings to them.

Our President, Jacob Zuma, cannot give leadership in the struggle against rape, attacks on Lesbians and other forms of gender-based violence. After his rape trial he emerged bruised and lacking in credibility to many South Africans. His utterance in court when he stated that he knew that a woman wanted sex because of what she was wearing was disgraceful. The way that his accuser was vilified was disgraceful.

If the President were to deal with the scourge of rape seriously and to lead the fight against abuse of women with honesty and sincerity, his dignity would be restored to many South Africans. But we have no faith that this will happen. When we look at his silence in the face of the repression of the movements and struggles of the poor, we have no confidence that we will ever have leadership from above.

Therefore it is clear that the leadership in the struggle against rape will have to come from below. It is time for real action against rape. As the UPM we are committed to doing whatever is in our power to work with others to end this scourge.

Enough! Genoeg! Kwanele!
—Linda Boo, cousin to Thandiswa Qubuda; Xola Mali, UPM spokesperson; Shongile Jonas, UPM Secretary for Women

has taken women's liberation seriously as central to the struggle for socialism." To refresh her memory: in the mid-1960s the sexism in the Left was so extreme—including in "the IS tradition"—that women started leaving the Left in droves, breaking up groups and flooding into, or starting their own, women's groups.

Women in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) were ordered to join women's liberation groups to take them over. They did not identify themselves as SWP-ers. When I confronted them—they weren't that hard to figure out—they accused me of "redbaiting" because I demanded that they be as open about their politics as I was about mine. From the 1960s to today, most of the Left has tried to belittle, destroy, take over and divert the Women's Liberation Movement.

Smith gives us nothing *but* reductionism, like asserting that all of women's oppression "starts with the family." There is nothing new here. Poor Lenin is trotted out so that Smith can put women's oppression where she thinks it belongs. Despite acknowledging the transformative effect of the Women's Liberation Movement, Smith's theoretical approach confines the women's movement's significance to being one of the "specific forms of oppression to maintain the system" of capitalism. Ah, finally the reason for women's oppression—rape, acid attacks, anti-abortion fanatics, female infanticide—it's all to prop up capitalism.

Smith never gets to the inadequacy of the principle that compelled her tendency's accommodation to "reductionism." She doesn't get to it because, like post-Marx Marxism in general, her attempt to assimilate Women's Liberation doesn't involve any real rethinking of the "IS tradition's" theoretical bases.

'I.S. TRADITION' IS VANGUARD PARTYISM

She is still practicing and preaching that accommodation: the elitism and vanguard partyism that led her tendency to a decades-long opportunistic relationship to women in struggle and deafness of the SWP and ISO to the revolutionary dimension of the women's liberation movement from the mid-1960s onward.

To Smith it is the so-called "revolutionary party" that has the theory and will lead the masses. In her article's summation she reduces Marxist feminist theory and practice to the party: "That practice must involve the building of a revolutionary party, because without a revolutionary socialist party, there can be no successful socialist revolution."

Tellingly, except in the most general terms, Smith's essay does not take up what women are doing and saying today or in the last 50 years. She quotes a few women theorists to make her points, but nothing from actual women fighting for their freedom, or even fighting for better human relationships in that "working-class family."

Raya Dunayevskaya, the founder of Marxist-Humanism, had a different view. She was opposed "to [the] attempt to reduce Women's Liberation to 'an organizing idea'..." To her, "Social revolution does come first, *provided* [Dunayevskaya's emphasis] it is not—indeed revolution cannot be—without Women's Liberation or behind women's backs, or by using them only as help-mates....It is precisely because," she wrote, "Women's Liberationists are both revolutionary force *and* Reason that they are crucial. If we are to achieve success in the

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

On Feb. 21, Russian police detained two middle-aged women wearing balaclavas and placing flowers on the altar of Christ the Savior Church in Moscow in support of the feminist activist punk band Pussy Riot. It was the anniversary of the band members' performance of a "punk prayer" protest song at that church. Two band members received a two-year sentence, and another was released on appeal with a suspended sentence for "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred," although they were really protesting the union of church and state.

* * *

In 2009, the Israeli feminist organization Isha L'Isha released a report stating healthcare workers were giving Ethiopian Jewish women in refugee camps, the three-month birth control drug Depo-Provera without their consent. A December 2012 TV documentary prompted the Health Ministry Director in January to forbid health workers from continuing this practice unless the women wanted the drug. There is controversy among journalists over the government's role in this practice, and whether the women themselves chose to use this form of contraception.

* * *

In February, in the first race of her first full season on the NASCAR Sprint Cup racing circuit, Danica Patrick became the first woman to win the coveted pole position for the Daytona 500 race, in which she won eighth place. She is enormously popular with female as well as male fans in this male-dominated sport. Feminists have noted that race car driving is a sport in which a woman can compete with men on an equal footing.

new revolutions, we have to see that the uprooting of the old is total from the start."

It is that total uprooting that women are reaching for from the streets of New Delhi to the squares in Egypt and Tunisia, including women in the U.S. demanding reproductive justice. Will the Left help, or see us only as fodder for their vanguard parties? It is high time the movement from practice was comprehended as itself a form of theory. It is our task to meet that movement from practice with a total philosophy of revolution.

Iranian girls learn bodies not sinful

In Iran, after the Islamic Revolution the whole issue of sexual health education was forgotten. Years later, a law made it compulsory for all marrying couples to attend a one-hour session at a local clinic on family planning and genetic diseases, including thalassemia—a serious inherited blood disorder.

We hypothesized that offering sexual health education to some of the most deprived girls in Tehran would result in the girls having more positive feelings about themselves and engaging in less risky sexual behavior. We initiated a program to try to do just that.

The girls, between 10 and 18, are often illiterate or uneducated, from poor backgrounds. Most are run-aways, the others are criminals. None have ever had sexual health education, and their knowledge about themselves is only what they learned from their peers and tradition or religion.

We start by explaining the anatomy of the reproductive system, adolescence, sexual health, and sexually transmitted diseases. The girls are encouraged to talk, and they jump at the opportunity. This education offers an alternative to the more mainstream traditional and religious teachings that say women and their biological changing are the root of sin.

I have seen more than 700 girls, most of whom are on the run from home, start viewing puberty and its symptoms as natural, as opposed to a sin, defect or crisis. They love and respect their bodies and consequently their "selves" more. With that disappears hatred and the wish for revenge. They stop blaming their family and stop developing more behavioral disorders, which would lead to a vicious circle in the end.

Ideally, we would also educate them about sexual and emotional health in relationships, to have natural and safe sex, and turn into healthier adults. I would like to examine whether it will make the girls less prone to sexual abuse if they know and love their bodies, have higher self-confidence, learn how to say NO, and believe that their bodies belong to themselves, not to others to hurt.

—Iranian social worker

Fight to test rape kits

Detroit—Four years after discovering 11,303 untested rape kits in a Detroit Police Department warehouse, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy's appearance on NBC's "Rock Center" gained national attention for her efforts to bring justice to victims of rape. Worthy obtained a million dollars in federal money to test the kits. Of the 600 tested so far, 21 serial rapists have been found. Worthy and her staff have devoted countless volunteer hours to identify and prosecute the perpetrators.

Reaction from women nationwide has been fast and furious. Anne Breslaw wrote on jezebel.com, "While his DNA sat on the shelf from 2002 to 2008, untested, one convict, Shelly Brooks, raped and murdered five women. (Writing that actually made me nauseous.) The idea of these sexual assault victims undergoing the invasive rape kit procedure so quickly after their trauma, only to result in bureaucratic red tape and slow-moving forensic work rendering their bravery futile, is no less than rage-blackout inducing."

Early last year reporter Abigail Pesta echoed that analysis in an article for *Newsweek*: "Cities across the country had reported stacks of kits: 11,000 in San Antonio, 1,200 in Albuquerque, 4,000 in Houston, according to Sarah Tofte, who has studied rape-kit pile-ups for Human Rights Watch. Experts estimate that hundreds of thousands of untested kits are languishing in police storage facilities.

"Part of the reason for the clog is the price of testing the kits. Each kit can cost an average of \$1,200 to \$1,500...But resources aren't always to blame, she says; often the kits are simply a low priority for police."

Some of the kits are 25 years old, but Worthy is seeking funding to test them all, approximately \$15 million. Tax-deductible donations can be made to the Detroit Crime Commission online at www.detroitcrime-commission.org or by mail: Detroit Crime Commission, 1001 Woodward Avenue Suite 650, Detroit MI 48226. (313-394-1600.) Specify "Wayne County Prosecutor's Office Rape Kit Initiative" on your donation.

—Susan Van Gelder

ATU orders bus drivers back to work

New York City—Over a month ago 8,800 school bus drivers, mechanics, and matrons—members of Local 1181 of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) who are responsible for transporting New York's children—went out on strike for the first time since 1979. This came after billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced his intention to eliminate the "Employee Protection Provision" (EPP) of the union contract.

Over the last two years, Bloomberg sought to shred the EPP, which provides a measure of job security for workers by requiring private bus companies chartered by the city to hire according to seniority. Bloomberg's goal was to liquidate the drivers' seniority. Veteran drivers have priority in picking routes, building up rapport with parents and children alike. Bloomberg's goal to break the union was evident when he put out a notice calling for new bids for the bus service.

The strikers kept up the picket lines through a cold New York winter, defying rain, snow, and



TWU workers and others rally in support of school bus drivers' strike

Bloomberg. The decision to order the drivers and matrons back to work in February came without any input from the strikers. There was no discussion within the union, just an announcement that the strike was over and that the drivers should return to work. But the question that many are asking is: what went wrong?

Although the 8,800 members of Local 1181 stood strong and united, the same could not be said for other unions representing school bus drivers. A Teamsters local and another local with school bus drivers in its ranks both failed to honor the picket lines. That helped break the strike by easing up the pressure on Bloomberg.

When the strike began, the union strike fund was close to collapse, but New York's other unions did not offer to help so that the workers could continue to stay out on strike. This lack of solidarity hurt the striking drivers and matrons.

At the end, union leaders were told by a number of Democratic Party politicians that if the union ended the strike *and* if one of them becomes mayor this year, they would "do right" by the union. But, as one union member put it, "Since when do we trust politicians, of any party?"

Not surprisingly, some of the bus companies are already starting to fire strikers, not individually but in large numbers. But as one former striker told me, although they lost the strike, it was important to fight, and that he was going to stay in the union.

All the ATU members can hope for now is that some Democratic Party politician will stand up for union rights if he or she is elected, a dubious proposition. The same politicians were nowhere to be seen during the strike, except at the end when they helped broker the sellout.

—Michael Gilbert

Car wash wage win

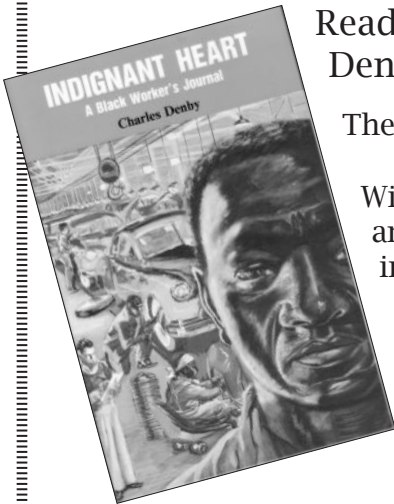
Bronx, N.Y.—Following the successful unionization of two New York City car washes (See "Car wash unionizing," Nov.-Dec. 2012 *News & Letters*), another car wash in the Bronx unionized after a protracted struggle with the management of the company. Sunny Day Car Wash initially fired twelve workers for trying to organize a union. The workers, Mexicans and Ecuadorians, fought back and protested their dismissal for two months.

Last November, the workers protested the fact that the company had not paid them for three weeks of work. After that protest, everyone was fired. But they set up a picket line every day in front of the car wash and got the support of other unions and community organizations. They demanded their jobs back and the payment of wages owed them.

This is the third victory of car wash workers in the New York City area in the last year. As one of the workers said, "My co-workers have demonstrated courage, and with the help of the organizations we can return to work today with dignity."

—Strike supporter

On the 35th anniversary of Indignant Heart: A Black Workers' Journal



Read Charles Denby on:

The early UAW

•

With Dr. King and Rosa Parks in Montgomery

•

Stokely Carmichael in Lowndes County

and much, much more

See literature listing, page 7

Meatcutters stand up

Queens, N.Y.—Trade Fair, a supermarket in Astoria, Queens, with a unionized meat department, is engaged in a scurrilous effort to break the union. But the union members at Trade Fair supermarket are standing firm. Their pride is evident in the union buttons they wear on the job which say, in English and Spanish, "Standing Strong, Prepared to Strike." Store management, in huge posters outside the store attacking the union, calls these displays of workers' determination "disruptive."

Signs outside the store announce that there are positions open in the meat department. One union member told me they are trying to fire union members and hire non-union replacements, part-timers, to take their place. He said the goal of management was to break the union.

When the union tried to defend the rights of their workers, management became verbally abusive and threatening towards the workers and their supporters, trying to physically intimidate the workers into breaking with the union. (See YouTube video, "Bully Trade Fair owner flips out on workers.")

As a union spokesman says in the video, their treatment has been disgraceful, and they ask, "Is this the American dream?" In response, Local 342 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, which represents many grocery store workers in New York City, has set up informational leafleting in front of the store, with volunteers from the union explaining the union's side of the story to community residents.

—M.G.

Attacks on organizing

Detroit—The number of unionized workers in the U.S. last year dropped by 400,000 members, to 14.3 million workers. This unexpectedly sharp decrease, to 11.3% of the work force, dropped union membership to the lowest it has been since 1916, when it was 11.2% of the work force, according to a report in *The New York Times*.

The reasons are many. Assaults on unions like right-to-work legislation in Indiana and Michigan and laws narrowing the right to union representation in Wisconsin had a huge impact on unions locally and nationally, as well as on the attitudes of workers toward their unions. Union membership last year fell by 13% in Wisconsin, by 18% in Indiana and by 6.6% in Michigan.

Huge demonstrations, rallies and protests by workers and their allies before anti-union legislation was passed, revealed clearly that workers were more than willing to do whatever was necessary to prevent the legislation, and they had massive national public support. This revolutionary spirit was quashed by union and political leaders and the reactionary legislation passed, dealing crippling blows to workers.

Nationally, the number of government union workers fell by 234,000 last year with deep cuts of teachers, police and firefighters as state budgets tightened. The states with the least number of union workers, as expected, are clustered in the South, where most have right-to-work laws that depress income, seen dramatically in the fact that full-time workers in right-to-work states make about \$38,600 a year compared to workers in union states who make about \$49,000 a year.

That is undoubtedly emboldening reactionary politicians in other states to introduce similar laws. It is no secret that Right-wing politicians in every state have such legislation already drawn up and are waiting for any opportunity to get such laws passed.

Other factors dimming unionization include the sophisticated strategies corporations employ to oppose unions along with intimidation, harassment and firing of workers. When union efforts succeed, corporations can delay the unionization procedures for years. The specter of unemployment is always looming on the horizon—not only the national unemployment rate, but also corporate threats to move jobs overseas or to other manufacturing facilities.

But the most important development is the transformation of union leadership from being militant fighters to contract concessionary specialists and corporation supporters. Workers have always known when their leaders represent or misrepresent their aspirations, and supported the most effective fighters for their interests.

Now unions have become so bureaucratized that the leadership is pounded into a mold to support policies to keep themselves in office, not to fight for the workers. This has resulted in an ever-widening chasm between the workers and leaders to the point that the leaders are now seen by the rank-and-file workers as their enemies rather than their champions. This has been confirmed with every contract that the workers reject but have forced down their throats.

Such constant betrayals have clearly revealed to the workers that, although they are aware that they are in a daily life-and-death class struggle with their corporate capitalist rulers, their leaders are not and cannot be trusted.

—Andy Phillips

WORKSHOPTALKS

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attention. Brill rightly says Obama's Affordable Care Act does not address the most obvious way to cut costs, which is to extend Medicare. Medicare is the most cost effective because, as a massive purchaser of healthcare, it uses its clout to keep prices down. The Affordable Care Act still leaves individual insurance purchasers subject to insurance-industry gouging.

WHO LIVES OR DIES

Obama's reform efforts aim to curb runaway healthcare costs like the over-prescribing of state-of-the-art tests for people with Cadillac healthcare plans. But what about the more serious abuse: manslaughter through deliberate negligence?

A friend of mine I'll call Tasha spent two weeks in the ICU at Highland Hospital in Oakland after an auto accident. Only after her discharge (perhaps prematurely, due to staffing shortage) to a skilled nursing facility did a nurse find the infection, caused by a super-resistant germ now lurking in hospitals, which would kill her within 30 hours.

Why did Highland Hospital miss detecting the killer bug which killed Tasha? Negligence—institutional, not individual, because of staffing shortages. As an inner-city general hospital, funded by Medi-Cal and Medicare, having a destitute patient population and a higher mortality and morbidity rate, Highland is severely understaffed and unable to fully cope with its tremendous patient load.

This speed-up costs almost 100,000 lives each year in hospitals private and public across the nation. We who tend to the sick every day have a lot to say about work conditions affecting patient care. Literally hundreds of thousands of lives of workers and patients could be saved if only we would be heard.

In the past, failure to deliver proper healthcare was deemed wayward, an anomaly, an offense warranting discipline and shortage of staffing or some other critical resource was recognized as a problem. Now chronic staffing shortage occurs by design.

HOW TO PROFIT FROM NEGLECT

Administrators don't call it neglect, just part of maintaining the financial health of the company. For-profit chains like Sutter and Tenet, masquerading as "non-profits," have gobbled up financially troubled community hospitals, then imposed severe cuts in patient services and staff to appeal to shareholders.

Karl Marx had warned us about this brave new world when he described how capital's constant revolutionizing of instruments increases the monotony and speed-up of its factories to the point where all the human interest is taken out of the workplace.

Labor advocates today only speak about the cost to our bodies and our income. But what's left out of the discussion is the cost to our minds. The monotony, speed-up and repetitive motion of the assembly line cause injuries not only to our bodies but to our minds.

Real healthcare reform cannot be achieved while the pull of capital's dominant ideology traps one and all into the self-fulfilling dead-end thinking that "there is no alternative." This kind of self-alienation infects everyone in society, even on the shop floor. A cure is afforded only when people who have to deliver that care reclaim not only their own labor, but the very meaning of labor itself, thereby reclaiming our own humanity.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF

RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: For Women's History Month, we present excerpts from "An Overview by Way of Introduction; the Black Dimension," Chapter 6 of the book Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution. The chapter serves as an introduction and overview for the book's Part Two, "The Women's Liberation Movement as Revolutionary Force and Reason." All footnotes are from the original; some have been omitted for space considerations.

Because it is our age which has forced upon the world consciousness the truth that Women's Liberation is an Idea whose time has come, it is necessary to turn backward and forward in time as well as to look globally at this phenomenon. Neither the urgency of our time, nor space, will permit us to turn as far back as 1647, when the first Maids' Petition to the British Parliament asked for "liberty every second Tuesday"; or even to Mary Wollstonecraft's "Vindication of the Rights of Woman," 1792. But we must begin with 1831, both because of its relevance to today, and because of the events that happened that year—in particular the greatest slave revolt in United States history, led by Nat Turner, who held that the idea of freedom is present in every slave so tempestuously that "the same idea prompted others as well as myself to this undertaking." It was the same year that a Black woman, Maria Stewart, became the first American-born woman, white or Black, to speak publicly.

Here is what Maria Stewart said:

O ye daughters of Africa, awake! awake! arise! no longer sleep nor slumber but distinguish yourselves. Show forth to the world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted faculties...How long shall the fair daughters of Africa be compelled to bury their minds and talents beneath a load of iron pots and kettles?... How long shall a mean set of men flatter us with their smiles, and enrich themselves with our hard earnings: their wives' fingers sparkling with rings and they themselves laughing at our folly?¹

When it comes to the question of woman, it was not only the voice of the working woman, or that of the Black dimension, that was not listened to. The same held true of the middle-class woman Margaret Fuller, whose intellect had been recognized as serious but who was still considered merely as a sort of "handmaiden" of the Transcendentalists.

Now that we have her full story,² it is clear that as a feminist she was an **original**, and that as an activist she was so far from the rarified atmosphere of Brook Farm as to have become a participant in the 1848 Italian Revolution, where she took a partisan as her lover. Whether or not Vivian Gornick is correct in her conclusion that "had she lived, Margaret Fuller would have become one of the first important American Marxists,"³ the point is that Margaret Fuller judged herself to "have become an enthusiastic Socialist."⁴

A WORLD-HISTORIC MOMENT

Objectively, though the United States had experienced no social revolution in 1848, a revolution in women's liberation did occur that year. The Woman's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, N.Y., disclosed a new force for revolution. Women throughout the world heard it. From St. Lazare prison in Paris, to which they had been sentenced for their activities in and after the revolution of 1848, Jeanne Deroin and Pauline Roland sent greetings in 1851 to the Second National Woman's Rights Convention, held in Worcester, Mass. On behalf of that convention, Ernestine Rose declared: "After having heard the letter read from our poor incarcerated sisters of France, well might we exclaim, Alas, poor France! where is thy glory? where the glory

The Black dimension and Women's Liberation as revolutionary reason

of the Revolution of 1848?"⁵

The 1840s had been filled with revolutionary ideas as well as actual revolutions. Thus, in 1843, Flora Tristan was the first to call for a Workers' International of men and women; in her book, *Union Ouvrière*, she stressed the need "to recognize the urgent necessity of giving to the women of the people an education, moral, intellectual and technical...[and] to recognize in principle, the *equality of right* between men and women as being the sole means of establishing *Human Unity*."⁶ The very next year, typhoid fever deprived us of this exciting utopian revolutionary. In that same year, however, 1844, Marx discovered a whole new continent of thought and of revolution, with his now-famous Humanist Essays.

It took a revolution—the Russian Revolution of November 1917—to dig out these 1844 Manuscripts from the musty, closed Second International archives. Once they were published, the shock of recognition was not just that they were great writings, but writings that disclosed so profound an Idea of Freedom that it transcended both time and place, that is to say, the Germany of the 1840s. The genius Marx could articulate such a philosophy of revolution, not because he was a prophet, but because he dived so deeply into human relations that he came up with this concept of Man/Woman:

The infinite degradation in which man exists for himself is expressed in this relation to the *woman* as the spoils and handmaiden of communal lust. For the secret of the relation-



Maria Stewart, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth

ship of man to man finds its *unambiguous*, definitive, *open*, obvious expression in the relationship of *man to woman*, and in this way the *direct, natural* relationship between the sexes. The direct, natural, necessary relationship of man to man is the *relationship of man to woman*...From the character of this relation it follows to what degree *man* as a *species* has become *human*...⁷

Which is why Marx concretized each human relationship as a "to be" instead of a "to have": "Each of his human relations to the world—seeing, hearing, smell, taste, feeling, thought, perception, experience, wishing, activity, loving...in place of all the physical and spiritual senses, there is the sense of possession, which is the simple alienation of all these senses...The transcendence of private property is, therefore, the total *freeing* of all the human senses and attributes." But for "the wealth of human needs [to] take the place of the wealth and poverty of political economy," a total uprooting is needed.

The Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse, when these Essays were published in Germany in 1932, perceived the pivotal point of philosophy, its integrality with actual revolution. He entitled his review "The Foundation of Historical Materialism,"⁸ and traced how embedded in Marx's philosophic critique was his theory of revolution. As he put it, "we are dealing with a philosophic critique of political economy and its philosophical foundation as a theory of revolution" (p. 3). Furthermore, Marcuse continued: "This does not mean that Hegel's 'method' is transformed and taken over, put into a new context and brought to life. Rather, Marx goes back to the problems at the root of Hegel's philosophy (which originally determined his method), independently appropriates their real content and thinks it through to a further stage" (p. 4). Marcuse devoted 45 pages to detail each of Marx's Essays, and not only as philosophy but as practical and revolutionary analysis

5. Miriam Schneir, ed., *Feminism* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 91.
6. G.D.H. Cole, *A History of Socialist Thought*, 5 vols. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1956), 1:186.
7. There have been several translations by now of the 1844 Manuscripts. The best known are those by Martin Milligan, Erich Fromm, T. Bottomore, and Loyd Easton and Kurt Guddat. I am using my own translation, however, which is the first one that was published in English, as an appendix to my *Marxism and Freedom* (New York: Twayne Pub., 1958). These essays are further discussed in chap. 9. Emphasis in original.
8. This 1932 essay by Herbert Marcuse first appeared in English translation in 1972 in *Studies in Critical Philosophy* (London: New Left Books). Pages cited in text following are to this edition.

related to the whole human existence.

And yet...and yet...missing from Marcuse's comprehensive analysis was any reference whatever to the Man/Woman relationship, which Marx made so central in the essay "Private Property and Communism." That essay covered a great deal more than the two topics in the title. What was involved in Marx's opposition to private property was very far removed from a question of "property." Rather, as he made clear over and over again, his opposition to private property was due to the fact that it "completely negates the *personality* of man..."

And to make absolutely sure that his readers did not find still other ways of either fragmenting or "collectivizing" the individual, Marx ended the essay with a warning that "communism, as such, is not the goal of human development, the form of human society."

Just as even a Herbert Marcuse missed hearing the crucial Man/Woman concept, so all too many Women's Liberationists today do not perceive the Black dimension as Reason in our age. Those who deny today that the idea of revolution and that exciting Black dimension were both crucial in establishing the first Woman's Rights Convention not only have forgotten that today's Women's Liberation Movement likewise arose out of the Black dimension, but have failed entirely to grasp what is the root of theory, its true beginning. Take something as simple as a name—that of Sojourner Truth—and compare it to what we today think of as an accomplishment when we use, not our husbands' names, but our "maiden" names. When Isabella became free and wanted to throw away her slave name, she included her entire philosophy in her new name. It is true that she attributed to God the reason for her name, saying that when she wanted to have nothing to do with her slave past and asked God for advice as to a name, "He" told her to sojourn the world over and reveal the truth to the people. But the fact is that her name tells us more than just the fact that she had broken with male domination.

Or for that matter, consider how she silenced the clerics at the meeting who were booing her. She asked them, "Do you believe in Christ?" and added, did the clerics know where Christ came from? She proceeded to tell them: "from God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him!"

Naiveté? Then consider the "generalship" of a Harriet Tubman, be it as conductor of the Underground Railroad or in her activity behind the lines of the Confederacy during the Civil War.

These historic facts of a Harriet Tubman or a Sojourner Truth⁹ are not the only manifestations of Black activity in and influence upon the early women's rights struggle and the Civil War; thousands were involved. The turning point for American Black women was

9. See especially Earl Conrad, *Harriet Tubman* (New York: Paul S. Erikson, 1943), and *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, an Ebony Classic (Chicago: Johnson Pub. Co., 1970).

continued on p. 5

For International Women's Day and Women's History Month, treat yourself to

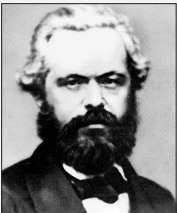
Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution

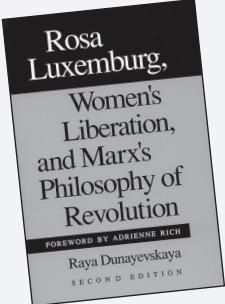


by Raya Dunayevskaya

Read the whole book to discover Rosa Luxemburg's feminist dimension, post-Marx Marxism as pejorative, Marx's concept of the Man/Woman relation, new moments of Marx's last decade which leave a trail to our day, and much more.







To order, see literature listing, p. 7

From the writings of Raya Dunayevskaya

continued from p. 4

reached in 1867, after the Civil War, when even the most revolutionary Abolitionists, like Frederick Douglass and Wendell Phillips, refused to collaborate with the women in their fight for suffrage on the grounds that this was "the Negro hour." Sojourner Truth hit back at her own leader, Frederick Douglass, calling him "short-minded." In that, Harriet Tubman joined. Not only did they separate from their Black male leaders and align with the white women, but it became clear that "short-minded" was more than an epithet. Rather, it was a new language—the language of thought—against those who would put any limitations to freedom....

INDIVIDUALISM AND MASSES IN MOTION

...What illuminates the contributions both of an original character and of the masses in motion is the way those masses in motion uproot the old and create the new. Let us, therefore, turn to see it in two very different locales and historic periods.

Take Africa, whose history, especially as it concerns women, has hardly been touched. We are first now beginning—without knowing the full story, even now—to hear about one of the great events that happened in 1929, which entered Great Britain's imperial history as the "Aba riots," but which the Africans named "The Women's War."¹⁰ This event, hidden from history, involved tens of thousands of Igbo women, who organized demonstrations in Calabar and Owerri provinces in southeastern Nigeria, against both British imperialism and their own African chiefs, whom they accused of carrying out the new British edict to tax women. These women, without any help from their own men, combined forces across tribal lines and began their protests, called "making war," or "sitting on a man."¹¹

This was by no means an individual act, but a traditional Igbo way of expressing revolt; it involved masses of women, meeting at an agreed time and place (in this case the hut of the Warrant Chiefs), dancing, and singing scurrilous songs that detailed the women's grievances and insulted the chiefs (including questioning their manhood) and banging on the men's huts with the pestles they used for pounding yams. Traditionally, this might last all night and day until an apology came and the man mended his ways. In the 1929 Women's War¹² it continued through November and December.

It was serious enough, and British imperialism feared it sufficiently to forget that women had not previously been fired on. This time they brought out the troops, murdering 50 women and wounding 50 others. The women, however, had won their point, and the taxes were not imposed. It was clear that, though the event had women leaders—Ikonia, Nwaunedie, Narigo—*this grassroots leadership had emerged out of the collective action of Igbo women.*

The greatest of all events were the March and November 1917 Russian Revolutions. We saw in the last chapter how very conscious Luxemburg was of those revolutions and how totally she practiced the principles of proletarian revolution in her call for the revolution in Germany. However, the last chapter did not describe in any detail the March Revolution, which was initiated by women. It was initiated, on International Women's Day, against the advice of all tendencies—Mensheviks, Bolsheviks, Anarchists, Social-Revolutionaries. Those five days that toppled the mighty empire demonstrate that it is never just a question of leaders, no matter how great. Rather, it is masses in motion....

* * *

Having viewed the relationship of Man/Woman as Marx's concept, integral to a philosophy of revolution; as it appears in the Women's Liberation Movement, as revolutionary force and reason; and at different historic periods, we can see that it is not just a question of then and now—that is to say, of contrasting historic periods. Rather, time is now to be considered as Marx defined it: "Time is space for human development."...

10. See Judith Van Allen, "Aba Riots or Igbo Women's War?" *Ufahamu* 6: no. 1 (1975). An elaborated version also appeared in *Women in Africa*, Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay, eds. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1976).

11. An exciting historical "forerunner" of the practice of "sitting on a man" is found in Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* (p. 116), where Marx is summarizing Lewis Henry Morgan's findings: "The women were the great power among the clans, as everywhere else. They did not hesitate when occasion required, 'to knock off the horns,' as it was technically called, from the head of a chief, and send him back to the ranks of the warriors. The original nomination of the chiefs also always rested with them."

12. "Women's War" is not as unusual a phenomenon as patriarchal histories would have us think, whether we are dealing with the dramatic fictional Greek *Lysistrata* or, as legend would have it in the land of Rosa Luxemburg's birth, with the 1863 Polish revolt against tsarism, which was likewise referred to secretly as "Women's War." In the preface to her *Comrade and Lover: Rosa Luxemburg's Letters to Leo Jogiches* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1979), Elzbieta Etinger refers to this 1863 revolt.

Lincoln and 'The Abolitionists'

The 150th anniversary of the Civil War, and of the Emancipation Proclamation in particular, has a lot of people talking about that history and race relations today. Steven Spielberg's movie *Lincoln* is less the cause than the effect of this surge in popular interest. *Lincoln* is very moving and beautifully made, with excellent acting and shrewd writing.

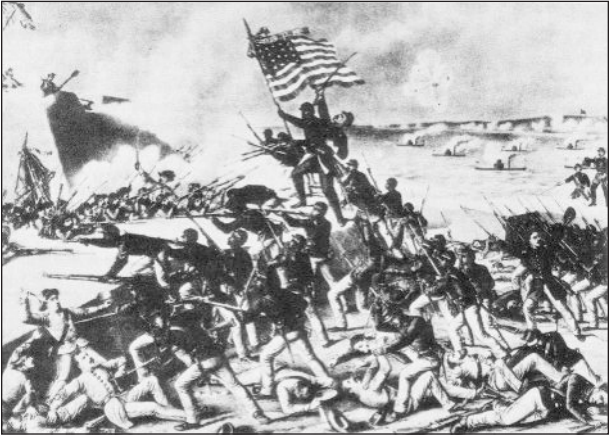
Tony Kushner's screenplay is shrewd enough to dramatize a selective slice of history as a covert argument for Obama-style politics. The historic achievement of the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery appears to depend largely on political chicanery, which is an endorsement of Obama's pragmatism and moderation. Radicals are portrayed as Lincoln's enemies, which is more true of the 2013 Obama than of the 1865 Lincoln. Aside from leading Radical Republican Rep. Thaddeus Stevens, Abolitionists are barely acknowledged.

A key scene involves a conversation between Lincoln and Stevens. Urging Stevens not to be so darn principled, Kushner-Spielberg's Lincoln asks him, "If in pursuit of your destination, you plunge ahead, heedless of obstacles, and achieve nothing more than to sink in a swamp...What's the use of knowing True North?" This motivates what is, from the movie's point of view, the high point for Stevens: his grudging decision to equivocate on the floor of the House about his views on racial equality. In other words, what is to be celebrated is a pragmatic compromise of principles.

PRINCIPLES AND SLAVERY'S ABOLITION

In truth, it was the uncompromising, principled radicalism of the Abolitionist movement—and the revolts and resistance of slaves and free Blacks on whose shoulders the movement stood—that made Civil War and the abolition of slavery inevitable, and transformed Lincoln from a moderate politician into the instrument of emancipation.

Lincoln himself acknowledged this near the end of his life: "I have only been an instrument. The logic and moral power of [William Lloyd] Garrison and the anti-slavery people of the country and the army have done all."



Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Colored Regiment charging Fort Wagner, South Carolina, July 18, 1863.

That quotation is mentioned in this year's documentary "The Abolitionists" on PBS's *American Experience*. It goes much further than *Lincoln* by showing how decisive the Abolitionist movement was in the country's history. Exploding the mainstream narrative of Abolitionists as a deranged fringe, it shows that the Abolitionists had a tremendous effect on U.S. politics and on attitudes in the North, while stirring up violent reaction in both North and South.

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?

Even this three-part documentary, however, has its limitations. While it takes up Angelina Grimke's groundbreaking advocacy of women's rights, it mentions neither Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, nor the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention on women's rights, which grew out of Abolitionism. Nothing is said of the new divide that arose within the movement after the 13th Amendment was passed, when even Frederick Douglass opposed the call by women like Truth and Tubman to include women's right to vote in the Constitutional amendments being pushed.

The full depth of the Abolitionists is best captured by Raya Dunayevskaya's *American Civilization on Trial* (emphases in the original):

"The movement renounced all traditional politics, considering all political parties of the day as 'corrupt.' They were inter-racial and in a slave society preached and practiced Negro equality. They were distinguished as well for inspiring, aligning with and fighting for equality of women in an age when the women had neither the right to the ballot nor to property nor to divorce. They were internationalists, covering Europe with their message, and bringing back to this country the message of the Irish Freedom Fighters.

"They sought no rewards of any kind, fighting for

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us! See contact information, p. 9.**

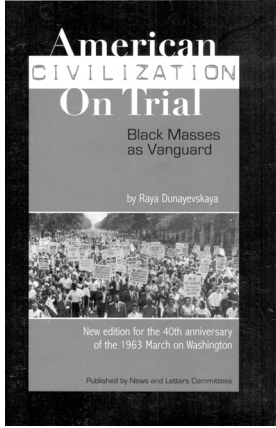
the pure idea....

"These New England Abolitionists added a new dimension to the word intellectual, for these were intellectuals, whose intellectual, social and political creativity was the expression of precise social forces. They gloried in being 'the means' by which a direct social movement expressed itself, the movement of slaves and free Negroes for total freedom."

In many ways, it seems that today's historians are still catching up with this brilliant pamphlet that was published 50 years ago, which so profoundly captured the truth of American history precisely because it is rooted not only in exhaustive research but in Marx's Humanist philosophy of freedom.

—Franklin Dmitryev

AS OTHERS SEE US



American Civilization on Trial

Raya Dunayevskaya's sublimely researched *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard* (ACOT), deserves a place among the U.S.'s most honest historical treatises. This seminal work overlays

Marxism and the struggle of the African American. It concludes that it is intrinsically human for any economically exploited people to self-appraise their worth. This process is not only dynamically held in permanence, but also one that globally connects the working classes.

Dunayevskaya's work is also an exegesis of racism in the U.S. She notes racism's dehumanizing pathos during times preceding the American revolution, tracks its insanity preceding and following the American Civil War, and elucidates its destructive tendencies during the post-World War II labor movements. *ACOT's* poignant reference to J. Edgar Hoover's attack on the Civil Rights Movement leaders serves as the bookend to the American founding fathers' rejection of language within its own Declaration of Independence that would have emancipated its African stepchildren. This evidentiary argument concludes that the stated American quest to secure global freedom is perpetually compromised by its rabid insistence that its darkly tanned offspring never enjoy the liberties that white men—even its liberal communists—take for granted.

ACOT's tenets are seasoned in Marxism. In their dialectics, these tenets not only provide guideposts for understanding a nascent U.S. agricultural economy's rise as the de facto world economic power, but also as a template for the peoples' struggle in societies throughout the world to liberate themselves from exploitation. Dunayevskaya notes Marx's view of pre-Civil War America as an economically unsophisticated and agrarian society. Marx, nonetheless, views the African in bondage as America's most likely change agent. She writes that Marx defines the common struggles of African slaves and Russian serfs as the most important powers in changing the world's economies. When examining its essence—that is to say the essential need for all of humanity to be free—people breach nationalistic constructs and unite in a common struggle. Whether the struggle in permanence takes place in Poland, France, England, Russia, or the U.S., it tends to dismantle the capitalist paradigm.

While *ACOT* masterfully captures the most important moments of U.S. history, it does not imagine African Americans' labor as an excess in a post-industrial world. Dunayevskaya's trajectory plots an improved African-American condition. The opposite proved true. After the first edition of *ACOT* was published, a high-flying U.S. economy began a nose dive. The manufacturing engine stalled. Industry jettisoned the sacrosanct annual wage increase. Tossed alongside it were jobs. African-American labor took the hardest hit. The vanguard of change woke to a bitter reality: its dizzying flight to digest more of the bourgeois construct, left it among the permanent class of the unemployable.

ACOT's guidance still provides a path out of darkness. Dunayevskaya lays out the route for African Americans to reshape themselves into a vanguard for those in a revolutionary struggle. This potential is realized when African Americans retrace the path that got them on the road to liberation over 200 years ago. Moreover, just as the capitalist boss jettisoned them to save his own margins, African Americans jettison all points of separation with their brothers and sisters in Russia, Europe, and all points on the globe. They identify themselves as a bright spirit in a common, united, and permanent liberation struggle.

—Ibrahim

AMERICAN CIVILIZATION REMAINS ON TRIAL

American Civilization on Trial (ACOT) is not "Black history." Rather, Blacks play such an enormous role in the U.S. that their history that is in ACOT is a history of America.

Octogenarian
Midwest



The movie *Django Unchained* could have been an ad for the NRA's position on the current gun control debate, namely that the only thing that can stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.

That formula may suit Tarantino's Spaghetti Western style, where a lot of bad guys do get killed. But it shortchanges the real history of the idea of freedom that was personified in the over 30-year struggle by the Abolitionists. I am glad PBS is finally paying some attention to that page of U.S. history.

Oakland activist
California

What was missing from the current Abolitionists TV special and the movie *Lincoln* was that "Black masses as vanguard" was not part of them. That lack reminds me of the passage in *ACOT* where Dunayevskaya writes briefly about the relationship of individuals and masses in motion. All the historians had marginalized the Abolitionist movement. The only one I heard about in high school was John Brown, who was always presented as a fanatic. Dunayevskaya didn't stop by saying the real history was marginalized. She brought up John Jay Chapman, who had written that the history of the U.S. from 1800 to 1860 would someday be rewritten with William Lloyd Garrison as its central figure. She said that is better, but still a history of great men, instead of masses in motion. The Abolitionists acknowledged that they stood on the shoulders

of the mass movement of slaves following the North Star to freedom.

Student of history
Illinois

The first Black U.S. president made a first ever trip to Burma, facing the new Asian power in China, India, etc. Is Obama selling American "soft power" in Asia? He is still expanding drone strikes, not to mention indefinite detentions. Democracy in the U.S. cannot be real as long as it is shackled elsewhere, just as "labor in the white skin cannot be free as long as in the Black skin it is branded."

Htun Lin
Oakland

My friend believes that an apology for slavery to African Americans is in order. Japanese Americans and Native Americans, too, deserve an apology. The way you atone is first acknowledge the humanity of the person you've harmed. You acknowledge a people so they can acknowledge themselves, to begin healing of those who did the harm as well as those who were harmed. When my humanity is marginalized just to have a job, how can you have a healing that lets me find my humanity within myself? It's necessary to look at the condition of African Americans, to acknowledge us as a nation so the healing can begin.

Ibrahim
Bay Area

The political letter from Raya Dunayevskaya in the January-February *N&L* took up the then new book, *ACOT*. Dunayevskaya wasted no time in elaborating key turning points becoming part of the historical flow of the book. She expected Marxist-Humanists would be elaborating on those points, be it more on John Brown, Confederate draft resisters, or anything up to the present day. We have an unfulfilled legacy to work on.

Bob McGuire
Chicago

RELIGION, REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION

I'd rejoice at the Pope's retirement except he and John Paul II stacked the deck of cardinals so thoroughly that whoever replaces him will just be his clone or worse.

Disgusted
Midwest

Ratzinger's resignation surprised me; I thought popes had to die in office. The press started interviewing people, saying how wonderful he is. I don't think so. He didn't do anything about pedophile priests, nothing for women except keep them down, helped destroy liberation theology and any opposition views, and appointed right-wing cardinals like himself. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said he was not so bad. What an apologist! Ratzinger was in the Hitler Youth. Lots of excuses were made for that, but other young people at the time stood up and said no.

Erica Rae
Illinois

Christianity has often inspired revolutionary mass movements among the poor. During the 17th-Century English revolution, the Levelers preached radical social equality and the Diggers took over the land, while Anabaptists established a utopian commune. In the 19th Century, the radically egalitarian Taipings took over half of China and held it against the Emperor for over a decade in the name of a Christian Utopia. In 20th-Century Latin America, Liberation Theology-inspired clergy and Christian base communities among the poor courageously resisted wealthy oligarchies backed by U.S. imperialism, in 1979 successfully overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua as part of the Sandinista coalition.

Is there any hope for Catholic renewal? Any perspective of a revival of the Liberation Theology movement of

the 1960s and '70s? Is there any scenario that one could imagine, wherein a rebellion of mainly female base Catholics and lower clergy succeeds in unseating the hierarchy?

Last August, 900 U.S. nuns gathered in St. Louis to prepare their reply to the Vatican's crude attempt to stifle their self-governing orders. Catholics across the country were stunned and outraged by the Vatican's attempt to threaten the women who have been the backbone of this church for centuries. Thousands of faithful Catholics have held vigils across the country, and more than 57,000 people have signed a petition organized by the Nun Justice Project in support of the nuns. Catholics have made clear that they stand in solidarity with the sisters and their good works among the poor and marginalized.

Richard Greeman
New York City

I know, I should be nice to the guy, because he is an 85-year-old man, I haven't walked in his shoes, blah, blah, blah. First of all, I am just some lapsed Catholic who could never touch a hair on the head of the German clergyman, nor would I want to. Second of all, Ratzinger didn't show any mercy when he closed down schools of liberation theologians fighting for the rights of the oppressed and the downtrodden. He didn't show mercy when he silenced priests, defamed works of good theologians who wrote on the side of the poor, and didn't have any pity on Fr. Roy Bourgeois, for example, who dissents from the Church's position on female ordination. He had no consideration for the consequences of "keeping up orthodoxy," so I don't find it inappropriate to call him the viper that he is now. If you are too nice to be angry at him, I got you covered.

Abe Cabrera
Louisiana

READERS' VIEWS

The alliterative listing of dramatic moments—"Seneca Falls, Selma, and Stonewall"—in President Obama's inaugural address was a powerful way to show how this history impinges on the meaning of the present. But it was no substitute for the creative power of the negative that stands on its own in the transformation of reality. After all, Seneca Falls came out of Abolitionism's total commitment to new human relations, completely in opposition to, and outside of, a Constitutional framework, while—as with Obama's hero, Lincoln—a Constitutional framework seems to predominate over Obama.

Ron Kelch
Oakland



THIS SOCIETY'S WARS

Chicago allows the murder of children daily. The city leaders express sorrow, but they don't do anything comprehensive to deal with the problem. Most Chicagoans are not particularly concerned with the deaths of innocent children because they are not their children. Racism rears its ugly head! The children are from Black or Hispanic neighborhoods. Private groups have rallies and meetings, but they don't coordinate their efforts. How long will this tragic killing of innocent children go on in Chicago and the nation? Where is the outrage? Where is the reverence for life, especially from the "pro-life" hypocrites?

Long-time human rights activist
Chicago

A thought keeps recurring to me. A girl who took part in Obama's inaugural parade came back to Chicago and got murdered. Some Black nationalists blame the system. I don't agree. Five hundred people in Chicago decide to kill someone every year. They do it for reasons other than necessity. How do we "fix" that? Some see those who do the killing as depraved, broken individuals. I don't know how to answer such a problem. It is not even warfare, or gang rivalry.

African-American Reader
Bay Area

Originally brought forth under the Nixon administration during the Vietnam War, the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT), was in essence a war tax meant to fund the genocide that the U.S. government perpetrated on the peoples of Southeast Asia. And yet now in 2013, 38 years after the end of that war, we still have the AMT. The government rakes in tens of billions of dollars each year from the AMT. This is positive confirmation of capitalism's permanent war economy.

Little Brother of Fighting Spirit
Michigan

This past month in New York, Occupy came to the Edison Electric Company, which is trying to eliminate pensions for the workers. A lot of people are now unemployed in this economic crisis. The capitalists manipulate the system by passing laws to get the most out of workers without paying fair wages or providing a comfortable life for them. Right now they are cutting teachers' wages even though we are in the worst economic crisis in the U.S. in decades. So again, there's a struggle between the poor and the rich, the capitalists and the non-capitalists.

Teacher
Los Angeles



WOMEN'S LIBERATION

I really hand it to the women of India for opposing the death penalty for rapists as regressive. I oppose it too, but

it is a big temptation to want to hurt them back!

Adele
Memphis

Nadezhda Tolokonnikova of Pussy Riot is ill in her Russian prison at Perm or Mordovia. She is 24 years old and a mother. She has shown her ability as a political leader and a performer. In Russia as well as the U.S., and everywhere else, prison confinement should be the punishment: *not* starvation, rape, freezing cold, unbearable heat, beatings, illness, 24-hour bright lights, etc. Prisoners have internationally recognized rights—human rights. Nadezhda and Maria Alyokhina—also imprisoned—did nothing wrong. Political dissent is spreading, as is the punishment for it. You or I could be next! If you want to sign a petition to Vladimir Putin and the Russian prison authorities, go to <http://act.watchdog.net/petitions/2390?r=91049>.

January
Northern California

The public debate on sharia is changing, as is evident at our speaking engagements. University societies the length and breadth of Britain are increasingly speaking out for secularism and human rights. There is a bill to rein in the power of sharia in Britain's House of Lords, exposing sharia bodies as being abusive to children in "marrying" young girls to old men in forced marriages. One Law for All continues to grow and influence this debate—including our vital opposition to the far Right and its attempts to hijack the issue of sharia law to further their own racist agenda. With your help, One Law for All will continue to lead the fight against sharia in Britain and elsewhere. You can help us. Our website is at: <http://www.onelawforall.org.uk/>

Maryam Namazie and Anne Marie Waters
Spokespersons, One Law for All

The Arab Spring showed the shortcoming of not fighting the sexism of the Muslim fundamentalist ideology. The cry of Iranian women against Khomeini's 1979 order to wear the chador, "At the dawn of freedom we have no freedom," is still valid in the Arab Spring. It is a challenge against the counter-revolution from within the revolution.

As gender alienation shows, we need many more continuing revolutions in the Middle East. We need the permanent revolution that Marx called for, in the Middle East, as the center of the world globalization of capitalist crises. The importance of the Arab Spring was not only that it brought revolution to the center of the struggle for freedom, but it also raised the question: Why revolution? Why now? It is demanding a new social and economic order.

Ali
Los Angeles



CAPITALISM ISN'T WORKING

Whoever thinks capitalism works needs to repeat just one word: sequester.

Observer
Detroit

Editor's note: There is a correction to the article, "Why 'green on blue' attacks?" in the Jan.-Feb. 2013 issue. There was a mistake regarding the number of Afghans killed during night raids between 2010-2011. Where the author had originally written the correct number, 1,500, it was mistakenly changed to 15,000. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

AT THE CROSSROADS OF HISTORY

When the Green Movement started in Iran over the 2009 election, the so-called leaders were part of the government who were against Ahmadinejad. The growth of the movement of women and youth got so big it became "out of control" by the so-called leaders. The government leaders got scared because the people found their own leaders and the movement was becoming radical. The "leaders" called it the Green Movement, green being a religious symbol, to try to limit it to a religious movement. But the Movement was past that point.

Middle Eastern Revolutionary West Coast

With great joy I received five copies of *Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya. It is really great and Gerry Emmett's Introduction was on target—clear, concise, and challenging to the Left. The professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York—the union of faculty and staff members—has been having a film series: "Combating Islamophobia," including showing films from Iran. I'm anxious to see what they will think of this new pamphlet and *News & Letters*.

David New York City

I'm grateful that you've *finally* published a collection of Dunayevskaya's writings on the Middle East. They are indispensable for any comprehension of what is happening in that region today. Her intellect is keenly missed as we experience the Arab Spring. But she gave us firm ground upon which to understand today's events.

Feminist Illinois

In Egypt Morsi took absolute power after the youth, women and workers started the revolution. The Islamist fundamentalists, the Muslim Brotherhood, came at the end and took the majority in the election. Morsi grabbed absolute power. The same thing happened in the 1979 Iranian Revolution. There was a deep struggle against the Shah where all the people were united, but the counter-revolution came in under Khomeini

and started killing anybody who was opposed to him. He brought in a religious, autocratic dictatorship, something never before seen in Iran.

Azadkar Los Angeles

DISMAL CAPITALIST HEALTHCARE

Suzanne Rose wrote in the last issue of the tragic case of 14-year-old Marie Freyre, who died due to inadequate healthcare. Her death illustrates that the U.S. *must* improve our healthcare system! A single-payer system would be a great step in the correct direction. Maria should have stayed in the care of her mother, as a judge ordered. As much as possible, the disabled and the elderly should have home care. The government should help pay substantially for that for families in economic need. The nursing home and hospital need to be held accountable for Marie's needless suffering and death.

Elise Chicago

What is described in "Rape and people with disabilities" (Nov.-Dec. 2012 *N&L*) is utterly disgusting. How in the world did this man get away with victimizing a physically disabled woman with the mental capacity of a child? The Connecticut court ruling is completely bunk, has absolutely no merit and they obviously understand nothing about people with severe physical disabilities. I am gonna be blunt, jail time isn't even a good enough punishment for the likes of an individual like this.

D.B. Clark Ontario

We marched, petitioned, and packed an open forum and a courtroom. We delivered 200 flowers to President Zimmer. And we won. One month after Toussaint and Jacob were beaten by University of Chicago police and arrested along with Victoria and Alex, the prosecutor dropped the charges. Victoria, Jacob, Tous, and Alex were fighting because Chicago's South Side didn't have a trauma center. It still doesn't. Please

sign the trauma center petition: <http://www.change.org/petitions/university-of-chicago-medical-center-expand-access-to-lifesaving-trauma-care-on-the-south-side-of-chicago>

The Administration and the prosecutor faced overwhelming, persistent, and creative opposition that came from people who rarely manage to speak together, including private university students, professors, teenagers in Woodlawn, social workers, senior citizens who marched with walkers, and even two curious Brazilians.

Duff Chicago

●

PLUNDERING DETROIT

The other shoe finally dropped in Michigan, as Gov. Snyder is poised to appoint a dictatorial emergency manager over the biggest prize of all: Detroit. Critics claim that emergency managers in cities like Flint have not solved cities' economic problems, but that is because Snyder is solving a different problem: privatizing assets like Pontiac's Silverdome or Benton Harbor's lakeside Jean Klock Park without local protest. Developers have already been lusting after Detroit's crown jewel, Belle Isle.

Ex-autoworker Detroit

●

FEAR OF NUCLEAR WAR...

Fear is being spread in Kashmir that nuclear war is imminent with Pakistan. People are being told to dig air raid shelters. Violent skirmishes on the India-Pakistan border have become routine, only to be overplayed occasionally by either side for political convenience. Given that both are nuclear-armed, it is imperative that saner counsel prevail. We urge all concerned to re-engage instead in working for the common prosperity of people on both sides. To see the full statement from Kumar Sundaram, visit <http://space4peace.blogspot.com/2013/01/indians-told-to-build-bomb-shelters.html>.

Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space Brunswick, Maine

...AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER

The State Department quietly released its new environmental impact statement on the Keystone XL pipeline on March 1, when all the news was focused on the budget "sequester." The statement claims that the pipeline is "unlikely to have a substantial impact" on the environment. The administration refuses to acknowledge that NASA's top climate scientist said that allowing an outlet for Canada's tar sands would be "game over" for the climate. Beware, Obama! The ever-growing climate justice movement is not going to take this sitting down.

Long-time environmentalist Escondido, Calif.

●

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I highly recommend *everyone* who feels empathy for other human beings &/ or other living things to follow and subscribe to @newsandletters #1u

@daytona_slim Florida

Editor's note: #1u is the hashtag for "One Union"—support all workers!

●

FROM BEHIND THE BARS

N&L is enlightening beyond measure. I always share my copies with fellow comrades, as a "study program."

Prisoner Lancaster, Calif.

Your prison mail tells me what's going on in the real world. Could you let me know who is my donor so I can thank them for how much the sub means to me?

Prisoner Delano, Calif.

TO OUR READERS: *Can you donate the price of a sub (\$5) for a prisoner who cannot pay for one? It will be shared with many others.*

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by Raya Dunayevskaya

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3-4/13

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Prisoner's 'Thin Comfort' dilemma

We are on lockdown status again, as every inch of the prison compound is searched for contraband. We're living on thin sandwiches again. We call them jam sandwiches. You take two pieces of stale bread, put a spot of peanut butter on one and jam them together. This time around is the worst ever. I was hungry day and night until another con began giving me his bag meals.

Across the wide expanse of cellblock directly in front of my cell on the opposite side lives an elderly Mexican-American who is confined to a wheelchair. The day after Christmas he began refusing his meals. I didn't think it unusual at the time because some people fast around holidays. But then I recalled that up to Christmas Eve he had been getting books delivered to him every day for months from the prison law library. That suggests he was working on his appeal or maybe even a lawsuit. Then abruptly after Christmas no more law books came and he quit eating. The guards didn't take notice because they work a different cellblock everyday. There is always a con or two who skips a meal and whenever that happens the guard just gives it to someone else because there is no shortage of cons asking for any "extras."

Nobody seemed to notice that the old man had quit eating. When we went on lockdown status on Jan. 11, he had not eaten in 16 days and he continued to refuse his meals. I don't know his name or even if he speaks English. I stand at my cell door window and smile and nod across to him. That is the extent of our communication. I began informing the guards at meal times that the old man had quit eating.

Long ago I read an article about I.R.A. prisoners inside English prisons who went on hunger strikes *en masse* to force England to recognize them as prisoners of war instead of common criminals. Many starved themselves to death and the horrid publicity of it forced the English to agree to the strikers' demands. One prisoner lived to see recognition granted and celebrated. But he was doomed nonetheless because after a couple of months or more of eating no food he had caused irreversible damage to his vital organs.

Not long after we began getting bag meals, at every meal the old man asked the guards feeding us to give his bag to me. So I began eating his sandwiches along with my own. He sits at his door at meal times and as soon as he sees that I have his bag he shoots me a thumb up sign and returns to his bed. I have asked a sergeant of guards and then a lieutenant and a captain to stop at his cell door to talk to him when they each came through the cellblock on their inspection rounds. They did, but still he refuses to eat. I eat his food and am grateful for it because it keeps the pang of hunger away from me.

As I write this on Jan. 22 it has been 28 days since the old man last ate. I woke up in the middle of the night to discover his cell door open. He was gone and I was startled by the sight of it. But then a few minutes later guards brought him back to his cell. I think they must be taking him to the medical department to monitor his weight loss. **There are horror stories floating around inside this super-segregated high security prison about force-feeding cons who are trying to escape their sentence by starving themselves to death.** They are strapped down to a gurney and a rubber tube threaded up their nose and down their throat to drip nutrients into their starved bodies.

I was able to get a guard to take a *National Geographic* and a religious magazine over to his cell and slide them inside under his cell door. A minute later the old man appeared at his cell door and shot me a thumb up sign. He is looking gaunt. I have done all I can to help him. I don't want him to give up on life but at the same time I look forward to eating his food and confess that deep inside myself I hope it doesn't stop. Does my soul have a hole in it for harboring such a thought? I reason with myself that if I refuse to accept his food the guards will just give it to someone else but that rationalization provides thin comfort. Prison is hell, I tell you. We're still on lockdown. —Joseph

California hearings on prison torture

Sacramento, Calif.—On Feb. 25, around 100 people, mostly family members of prisoners organized as California Families Against Solitary Confinement (CFASC), gathered on the state capitol steps. They shared their stories before a historic second legislative hearing on California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDC) policies regarding prisoners held

liberation movement in San Quentin, one of the goals was to build a new man, the way Brother Malcolm X showed we could...We don't know how long it will take to create that new, beautiful world. It might take generations. But if we continually work at it and try to create the new man in ourselves, we can achieve a personal freedom. I go through different changes to stay human

for I will never get used to isolation and deprivation."

After the rally, we filed into the hearing room, refuting CDC's lies about their new program. Assemblyman Tom Amiano opened the hearing by saying he was humbled that CFASC members held bake sales to raise money to make the trip. He ended the hearing by acknowledging that this is a "populist" issue larger than any hearing.

The following day, CFASC lobbied for ending solitary confinement. It was surprising how many

legislators watched the televised hearing. One senator said "they have never" seen a hearing like this one and "it was the talk of the offices," "a lot of light was shed."

—Urszula Wislanka



Families gather in Sacramento for hearings on extended solitary confinement

in the Security Housing Units (SHUs). An estimated 5,000 prisoners are tortured in California by being subjected to extended solitary confinement, 2,400 of them for indeterminate time.

Following the prisoners' hunger strikes in July and Sept.-Oct. 2011, CDC proposed revisions to its policies. The proposed revisions do not address *any* of the prisoners' demands and in fact codify practices that are totally unacceptable. The prisoners, who have been promised that their demands will be met, have rejected CDC's proposal and are planning another hunger strike for July 8.

For many people the rally was their first action. They spoke from the heart. **Dolores Canales** said, "My life changed on July 1, 2011, when the SHU prisoners went on hunger strike. I knew my son had spent a decade in solitary confinement. I knew my son was unjustly held in isolation. I knew this, and I didn't give it a second thought. Now, I cannot stop thinking about it."

"The National Institutes of Health and federal law prohibit research chimpanzees to be held in solitary confinement. It is seen as detrimental to their mental and physical health as they are social animals. Chimpanzees must be able to see and hear other chimps, they must be able to touch each other as well."

"Chimpanzees are seen as social beings. What are human beings? Human beings that are being deprived of human contact, human beings that are being deprived of natural sunlight. Why is there no law to protect my son, your husband, your father, your brother, your sister and your loved one? We are demanding that they enact such a law in the United States of America!"

Another family member read a letter from a loved one in the SHU: "CDC refuses to change. How many others will be destroyed by this failed system? For human beings to decide to starve themselves to death speaks volumes to the conditions here in the SHU."

Another mother said: "When I go visit my son, I see others who have been in there for 10, 20, 30, some over 40 years. It breaks my heart. What does that say about the future of my son, who has been there for 'only' four years? What do I have to look forward to? What does his son have to look forward to? He has not been able to touch his son since he was three years old! It devastates everybody. We have to stand up and make changes so that families can be reunited, so we can touch them, so they can be treated as human beings."

"I lay awake at night thinking of how my child is suffering. None of us should have to worry about the mental condition of our loved ones. None of us should have to worry about their physical condition. They have not harmed anyone, have not stabbed anyone. A prisoner who actually assaults a guard gets 18 months to two years in the SHU and then he is out."

"We're not here to make CDC lose face. We just want you to do the basic human, moral thing."

Hugo Pinell, 42 years in solitary, sent a statement written in February: "In 1967, when I joined the

Escape from Camp 14

Escape from Camp 14, by Blaine Hardin (Viking, 2012).

The recent news out of North Korea is that Kim Jong Un, the third dictator in the Kim dynasty that has ruled North Korea since its inception in 1948, continues to explode nuclear weapons, following that with threats to use them. The state is obsessed with nuclear war capabilities even as most North Koreans live under extreme deprivation if not outright starvation. *Escape from Camp 14* is the story of Shin Dong-hyuk, the only person born in a North Korean slave labor camp to escape, doing so at the age of 23 in 2005. Shin's life is testament to the putrid essence of that militarized, state-capitalist totalitarian society.

The Kims, beginning with the "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung who ruled North Korea from 1948 until his death in 1994, added a new abomination to Stalin's and Mao's massive use of slave labor, reeducation camps. Kim Il Sung decided to not only enslave his political opponents and those who showed any whiff of dissent from his absolute rule but to **also sentence their families and offspring through three generations.** Shin was born and grew up in a camp that had no reeducation function. He was only to be worked to an early death and wasn't even deemed worthy of being subjected to state propaganda about the "Great Leader."

What being alive meant for Shin was that others, including his family, were either mere competitors for food or armed guards whose job was to severely punish and usually execute anyone who broke the rules, especially the rule to turn in violators of the rules. "Snitching" is a pejorative which normally implies some previous mutual human relation, but here it was just a given condition of life from the start. The only assemblies allowed in the camp were for frequent public executions which were "teachable moments" that shaped Shin's earliest memories.

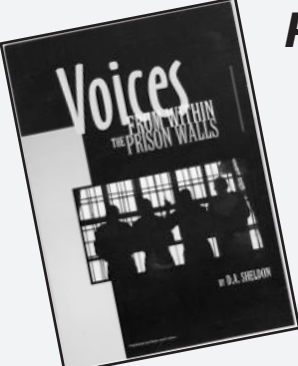
Shin began to have a different kind of relationship with another human being when he was cared for by another prisoner after being severely tortured. Then when Shin himself was assigned to befriend a new prisoner, Park Yong Chul, in order to snitch on him, Shin made the fateful decision to not snitch. Thrilled with the description of foods available outside of camp, Shin developed a bond with Park.

Shin's new friendship and experience of mutual trust with Park led to their decision to attempt an escape. Park didn't survive, throwing Shin again into a situation where he could trust no one. He came to realize that even acts of kindness, like the offer of a job when he reached China, were motivated by greed, the exploitation of his labor.

The power of Shin's story is his own assessment of his life as a struggle to become human. What is made painfully clear to anyone who dares read this book is that the struggle to become human never ends.

That is an especially important message for those leftists, caught in their own binary thinking and abstract revolutionism, who can support North Korea as an opposite to U.S. imperialism. As Hegel and then Marx kept making abundantly clear, the dialectic has nothing to do with subsuming the concrete, the lived experience. Rather, recognizing the dialectic in the movement of the lived experience can be a totally new beginning in human freedom.

—Ron Kelch



Prisoners speak for themselves

Two perspectives on the prison struggle:

Voices from within the prison walls

Pelican Bay hunger strikers, 2011

See News & Letters literature list, p. 7



Rallies across U.S. against Keystone XL pipeline

40,000 in Washington, D.C.



Julia Hicks

Washington, D.C.—I drove from Memphis to Washington with three others and joined the 40,000-plus people there on Feb. 17 for the Forward on Climate Change rally, the biggest ever held on climate change in this country. Yes, the 15-hour drive was long. Yes, it was super cold. Yes, we stood for a long time during the rally and were glad to begin marching to restore feeling in our frozen toes. But yes, we were glad and proud to be there.

I attended my first protest in Washington, D.C., in the 1980s, returning many times to protest U.S. involvement in wars in Nicaragua and El Salvador, then to demonstrate against our invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. Those marches were protests. We were expressing our outrage at our government for such unforgivable acts of aggression. It felt good to join so many others who were just as angry and ashamed.

The climate change rally was not like the anti-war protests. We were there for something more than to protest and to show our indignation. We were there knowing that President Obama could decide not to approve the Keystone XL pipeline. We were there knowing that President Obama has urged us as citizens to "make him" do what is right. We were there knowing that, as Van Jones said, this decision could define him. We were there because we are hopeful that he will do what is right and begin legislating to save our planet rather than to save oil executives.

Then we learned that President Obama was not at the White House on that day. He was in Florida, golfing with oil executives. So... we shall see.

—Sandy Furrh

Climate Chicago rally

continued from p. 1

Keystone pipeline before I came out today. I want to learn more about what I can do and different movements that are afoot. All the storms we've been having are making climate change more urgent. Reading about it made me comprehend how big it is and how much immediate action is required.

—Ben

* * *

I am part of a generation that will either receive the catastrophic effects of climate change or will come together in order to fight for our future. I want a future that isn't compromised by huge fossil fuel companies. I want a society that puts my friends and family before profit. I'm a member of CYCC, a lovely group of dedicated students with a shared dedication to ending fossil fuel consumption and attaining a just and sustainable future. We know that our efforts can make a difference worldwide. We will not stand by while fossil fuel companies wreak havoc on our planet **and** our health. We cannot wait for politicians and Big Oil to shape our future. We need to join across borders and backgrounds, genders and ethnicities, to reshape our world. We need to fight for all the children who may live in a world completely different from the world we grew up in.

—Virginia Baker

Special offer for new book:

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Buy a copy at the regular price of \$10 with free shipping and also receive a 1-year sub to *News & Letters*. Save \$7.00!



In Los Angeles

Los Angeles—On Feb. 17, over 1,000 environmental activists gathered at La Placita of historic Olvera Street to agitate to stop the tar sands Keystone XL pipeline. The pipeline is to run over 2,000 miles from Canada through the U.S. to the Gulf Coast. There, this dirtiest of oil will be shipped to the Asian market.

The protest was begun by Canadian First Nations people as the Idle No More Movement to stop the mining of tar. It was part of a massive demonstration the same day in Washington, D.C.

Participants included the Pachamama Alliance, Native American women drummers, Aztec dancers, Food and Water Watch, Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC), Sea Shepherd, Alliance for Climate Education, Green Party, League of Women Voters, Children from Union Elementary Schools Carbon Science Club, students, ML King Coalition, Occupy people, various Marxist groups, and many others. Noticeably missing were large labor unions.



Robert Stuart Lowden

Some of the many signs read "tar sands = extinction," "carbon-oil-gas = death," "tax carbon," and "Wanted: Stephen Harper and Trans Canada for genocide, stupidity, terrorism and greed." "

We marched for a mile to City Hall, where speakers addressed the crowd with a PA system powered by solar panels.

Speakers ranged from Lakota Chief Phil Lane, Jr., who said we do not want our sacred land destroyed and thanked Stephen Harper for awakening a sleeping giant, to Congressman Henry Waxman, who urged President Obama to stop Keystone, noting there were 25 separate climate crises in 2011 and 2012. We heard from climate scientists who told of worsening severe weather; women of color speaking of how, because of racism, pollution impacts minorities more severely; a homeowner impacted by fracking who said their house used to be in paradise, now it's in hell; a longtime anti-nuclear activist who warned of the dangers of the aging San Onofre Nuclear Power Plant in Southern California; and several poets, including a Black woman who recited her poem on trash that goes into a can but doesn't go away, asking, "How many landfills can we fill?" There was also a large cloth petition for us all to sign which will be sent to President Obama.

The rally ended with everyone joining in a traditional Indigenous round dance to the beat of the women drummers.

Global warming and climate change are caused by expanding capitalist production, consuming massive amounts of oil, coal, methane gas, gasoline, timber (logging), etc. As the *News & Letters* article "Climate Chaos and Capitalism" (Sept.-Oct. 2012) stated: "Until we can abolish capital, we will have no chance of avoiding climate chaos."

—Basho

In San Francisco



David M'Otto

San Francisco—On Feb. 17 there was a Climate Forward rally at Justin Herman Plaza protesting carbon emissions, the Keystone XL pipeline, fracking and other threats to the environment. Before the rally, as some 6,000 marchers completely encircled a nearby large city block containing State Department offices, dozens of Indigenous people held a prayer vigil. One of them, a young First Nation woman from Canada, told the crowd about the Idle No More movement started by four women (see "Idle No More," Jan.-Feb. 2013 *News & Letters*).

—David M'Otto



by Suzanne Rose

Chicago, Ill.—After a Seattle couple ordered their six-year-old daughter with disabilities to undergo a treatment to keep her physically small, a coalition of disability rights activists including ADAPT, Not Dead Yet and Feminist Response in Disability Activism met on Feb. 19 with leaders of the American Medical Association to discuss the AMA's reaction. The advocates asked the AMA to issue a statement opposing the "growth attenuation" treatment that the girl endured, which included a hysterectomy, removing her breast tissue and giving her massive doses of estrogen in order to keep her from going through puberty. Disability activists around the world have condemned the practice, some calling it "mutilation" and "abuse."

* * *

New Delhi, India—Disability rights groups joined the One Billion Rising global campaign to end violence against women, spotlighting harassment and poor treatment faced by disabled women. Samarthiyam Anjee Agarwal, an organization which promotes accessible environments, organized events highlighting violence against women with disabilities. Their initiative got the support of the Delhi Metro, which displayed digital flash messages on violence against women in its train coaches and at all Metro stations. At the YWCA and Parliament Street, dancers in wheelchairs performed "Delhi Rising." Their message to women with disabilities was "Celebrate life, celebrate diversity and celebrate freedom."

* * *

New Market, Md.—The death of Robert Saylor, a 26-year-old man with Down syndrome killed in police custody, has been ruled a homicide. He was asphyxiated on Jan. 12 while lying handcuffed and face down on the ground. The police were called to the movie theater where Mr. Saylor was watching a movie with his caregiver. When she left the theater to get her car, Robert waited for her in his seat and wouldn't leave. That's when a theater employee called the police. When his caregiver returned, the police ignored her and her efforts to de-escalate the situation. They said Mr. Saylor was distressed after being handcuffed, appeared to panic and started to struggle. He had not threatened anyone. "Robert just loved everybody," said his mother, Patti. "If the police had gotten the proper training on how to deal with someone with Down syndrome, this wouldn't have happened."

* * *

St. Louis, Mo.—The Transportation Security Administration is apologizing to a Missouri family after agents at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport on Feb. 9 detained Lucy, a three-year-old with spina bifida in a wheelchair heading to Disney World for a vacation. Agents took away her stuffed animal and tried to stop her parents from filming their body search of Lucy and her pink wheelchair, telling them it was illegal which is not true. The family had made it through the TSA checkpoint, but as they walked to their gate, another TSA agent pulled Lucy aside for additional screening. Annie, Lucy's mother, refused to stop filming. The video shows Lucy weeping uncontrollably and screaming that she no longer wanted to go to Disney World.

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From India to Egypt to U.S., women fighting for freedom

continued from p. 1

tions the government did not accept. This is disturbing, as it continues the practice of giving soldiers a green light to rape as they have historically done and are still doing, for example in Kashmir. Indian women have made it clear that they see rape and sexual abuse embedded in their society as a way to keep women down.



As Kavita Krishnan, secretary of the All India Progressive Women's Association, said of the new restrictions on women, "I don't think that all the reaction was due to fear of sexual violence. The reaction is also to the assertion of freedom. When a woman starts demanding freedom and rights, that's where the discomfort begins."

CONTINUING THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

The second recent event is women's—and men's—response to the mob attacks on women in Cairo's Tahrir Square. First women and men created organizations to physically protect women in the Square. One such group is Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment/Assault (Opantish). They track and document the attacks and try to intervene and take the women to safe houses or hospitals. They are pressuring groups who call for demonstrations to make sure the area is secure for women; and they make the point that to fail to do so reflects an attitude of indifference or worse to women's oppression. Opantish states, "These attacks aim to exclude women from public life and punish them for participating in political activism and demonstrations." They stress that ignoring the dangers women face "in the ongoing struggle for justice...jeopardizes not only women's participation but the very success of the revolution."

Another response to the mob attacks was taken by The Uprising of Women in the Arab World (see "Women WorldWide," Nov.-Dec. 2012), who called for protests on Feb. 12 at Egyptian Embassies around the world. They began as a Facebook group but have made the leap into the physical world. Demonstrations were held around the world, including in Brussels, Belgium; Morocco; several cities in Egypt; Tunisia; Sudan; Yemen; Jaffa, Gaza and Ramallah in Palestine; the USA; Italy; Hungary; Germany; Canada; and Russia. Women used the demonstrations to show solidarity with all Arab women's rights, not just Egyptian, and as a way to critique their own societies. Many took advantage of the day to show the suffering of Syrian women.

ONE BILLION RISING

The third event was the One Billion Rising action on Valentine's Day. This was conceived by Eve Ensler, author of "The Vagina Monologues." The name comes from the fact that one in every three women in the world, that's one billion, will be beaten or raped during her lifetime. One Billion Rising called on people to strike and dance to call attention to violence against women. The call to dance was inspiring. As a 25-year-old woman in India said, "Dance allows you to express emotions—outrage, anger, hope—that sometimes words don't allow you to." One Billion Rising spread like wildfire through India. Tens of thousands joined rallies and dance events there. Women saw it, as one said, "as a new struggle for freedom." In Mumbai alone, more than 1,000 people came together to take a pledge to respect women.

In Somalia, more than 300 women gathered in Mogadishu. About 600 people danced and sang in one of at least five events in Egypt. In Indonesia, where a high court judge had recently joked that women might enjoy rape, there were many One Billion Rising actions across the islands. There were 40 events in New York City, several in Turkey and Germany; and 1,500 danced in Iceland. Women organized flash mobs in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; in City of Joy in Congo; and in Bangladesh 1,000 acid attack survivors took part in rallies across the country.

Women also danced in Tunisia. The recent assassination of opposition leader Chokri Belaid shows the ruling Islamist party Ennahda's complete unwillingness to rein in hard-line Islamist Salafists. Belaid's murder was preceded by attacks on women and others, as homegrown reactionaries try to destroy Tunisia's family code, one of the most progressive in the Arab world.

Tunisian women are adamant that they will move

forward, not back. Their spirit and determination to create something new were expressed passionately by a woman in low-cut jeans and a sweater who got up on top of a car and faced a large group of young Islamist men harassing her to wear the hijab. She yelled at them fearlessly: "This is Tunisia, a country with a 3,000-year-old history. As for you, you are mere outsiders and bloody descendants from the deserts of Saudi Arabia, destined to be on the sidelines of history. Tunisia will never become another Afghanistan!"

WOMEN FIGHT FOR REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

In the U.S. too, women are facing that worldwide oppression, and here too they are fighting back—continuing the 50-year struggle for women's liberation. Their biggest battle is in reproductive rights, with state legislatures coming up with one inhuman law after another—some 1,100 bills sought to limit abortion rights and 135 passed in 36 states in 2012. Now, Texas has a new law that makes it mandatory to display an ultrasound to women who have decided on abortion. Even if a woman averts her eyes, the doctor must give a verbal description of the fetus.

North Dakota and a slew of other states are trying to pass so-called "heartbeat" bills that would ban abortion as early as six weeks, before most women even know they are pregnant. Right-wingers in Mississippi successfully forced all abortion clinics in the state to close. Indiana introduced a bill that would require women to endure two expensive, invasive, and completely unnecessary transvaginal ultrasounds before and after having a medication abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy. And there is a push in all 50 states to pass so-called "personhood" measures declaring a fertilized egg a human being, which could ban all abortion and could outlaw common forms of birth control and in vitro fertilization. It also puts a woman who has a spontaneous abortion in legal limbo.

There is as well the Catholic hierarchy's well-funded attack on birth control that tries to strip away women's freedom under the guise of religious freedom. Birth control is both a means to control fertility and healthcare because women's health cannot possibly be separated from women's sexuality and pregnancy. To impose a religious ban on insurance funding for needed medical devices and medication is tantamount to the Catholic hierarchy imposing a fatwa on birth control.

While women in India work to stop their army from raping women under occupation, U.S. women are fighting against the rape of women soldiers by their so-called comrades in arms. Sexual assault on military women is estimated to be 22,000 a year. Nothing the military has done—and they have only done something because of the huge outcry women have already made—has put a dent in the number of attacks. As long as women have to report rapes to superiors who control their jobs, promotions, and in the military their very lives, rape in the military will thrive. Military rape and abuse remains a "silent epidemic." To break that silence, women have started the "I Am One" campaign that documents the personal experience of women survivors and puts them on the web.

REPUBLICANS HELD VAWA HOSTAGE

Another sign of the War on Women is how Republicans took the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) hostage, first holding it up for over a year, then trying to gut it instead of passing it. The House Republicans' version, which was rejected by the Democrats, completely eliminated any protection for LGBT people. It grudgingly granted tribal courts some authority needed to



One Billion Rising in Washington, D.C.

prosecute non-Native American men who rape or abuse Native women on reservations. But, always mindful of white rights over all others, the Republican version granted those prosecuted the right to move their cases to a federal court. Furthermore, in a stunning act of racism, those found guilty by an Indian court of battering and/or raping Native American women on Indian land could only receive a maximum sentence of one year! That racism and xenophobia extended to immigrants and trafficking victims, some of the most brutalized women in the world. It would have limited conditions under which undocumented women could have legal status while their claims were investigated.

Nevertheless, 138 Republicans voted against passing the VAWA. The only reason it was eventually passed by the others is women's anger, expressed in the November election with a 10% gender gap that returned President Obama to office and kept a Democratic majority in the U.S. Senate. It would have elected a Democratic House majority as well except for successful Republican gerrymandering that gave short shrift to women, Latinos/as and Blacks.

INTERNATIONALISM OF STRUGGLES

Violence against women is, tragically, an international phenomenon and women worldwide are fighting it. While the form of the demonstrations may differ, the content is strikingly the same as women in each country articulate that violence stems from their own cultures. They reject the idea that it is women who should change their behavior or dress more modestly, drink less, stay hidden, stay veiled, wear this or that, stay in

at night—the list never ends. Rather, women are demanding that men must change, that their entire societies must be transformed.

Women have—explicitly—positioned themselves at the center of the struggle, raising questions about the needed totality of any revolution. It must include all segments of society.

That women, globally, are challenging very basic aspects of their societies—and this is true in both developing and developed nations—is new. What shines through so luminously in countries like Egypt and Tunisia and is also evident in the U.S., is that the struggle is about new, really human relationships, and that it is a

revolutionary struggle.

Today, women's liberation has shown itself to be the heart—the driving force—of all genuine revolution. Any separation opens the door to counter-revolution. The ongoing struggles for freedom make clear that nothing short of a banner of new human relationships, from Man/Woman to labor, is needed.

Celebrate International Women's Day with:
Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future



"No doubt we will not fully overcome male chauvinism so long as class society exists.

But we can and will break up its monolithism. We can and will witness the development of women themselves not only as force but as reason. We can and will be a catalyst not only for our development as all-round human beings, but also for that of men. The first step in that direction is to meet the challenge as it appears, everywhere it appears, any time it rears its head, under no matter what disguises. The first act of liberation is to demand back our own heads."

—Raya Dunayevskaya
From: *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution*

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NEWS & LETTERS

VOL.58/NO. 2

MARCH-APRIL 2013

News & Letters (ISSN 0028-8969) is published bi-monthly. Subscriptions are \$5 a year (bulk order of 5 or more, 25c each) from News & Letters, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Telephone 312-431-8242, Fax 312-431-8252. Periodical postage paid at Chicago, Illinois. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to News & Letters, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Articles may be reprinted verbatim if credited to "News & Letters."

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News & Letters is printed in a union shop.

News & Letters is indexed by Alternative Press Index.

ALTERNATIVE PRESS

TAMPCO PRESS

CHICAGO, IL

457

Save City College of San Francisco!

San Francisco—What is happening at City College of San Francisco (CCSF) is something even the most avid conspiracy theorist would find hard to imagine.

Until July 2, 2012, the college had never received any sort of sanctions from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). In fact, in 2007, the *New York Times* named CCSF as one of the top 11 community colleges in the nation. Then suddenly, on July 2, the ACCJC issued the most serious of three possible sanctions, an order to **show cause (why the college should not be closed)**.

In response, CCSF met the recommendations of the Commission, and in November San Francisco voters passed Prop. A, which led to a projected \$16 million in funding. But then, in the same month, under the new interim Chancellor Thelma Scott-Skillman, a more than \$10 million budget gap appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. The more than \$26 million in funds presently unaccounted for are called the "Scott-Skillman Gap."

It is now clear that more is going on than meets the eye. It appears that major decisions are being made behind closed doors, with no accountability. The plan seems to be to dismantle the legacy of FDR's New Deal, of which CCSF was a creation. At CCSF, that means

transforming the college into a school for narrow job-training, especially for the tech industry, or a feeder school for four-year colleges, and to end the whole concept of lifelong learning.

Education for working-class and minority people is largely being abandoned. This goes along with the recent deregulation of for-profit schools and the war on public education in general. **Though it is only one of six regional accreditation commissions, the ACCJC accounts for 89% of sanctions issued nationwide between 2003 and 2008.**

One important question also arises: what kind of accreditation does the ACCJC have, what is their authority based on? Though it supposedly oper-

ates under federal and state authority, ACCJC claims to be independent of government; in other words it is a private organization. It is really a form of regulatory control which appears to have been hijacked by industry. A big fight is brewing, and hundreds of students have joined the movement to save CCSF.

On Feb. 21, after a noon rally on Ram Plaza, students occupied the CCSF administration building all night. Expect big changes and a powerful movement in the future.

—D. Chêneville

photo by Labor Video Project



Britain's rulers keep failed policy of austerity

London, England—Moody's Investor Services, the international credit ratings agency, stripped Britain of its elite AAA credit rating, after citing stumbling economic performances and ongoing struggles to reduce its deficit. This is precisely what ongoing government attacks on welfare were supposed to prevent.

Chancellor George Osborn is struggling with intense unpopularity following his government's "austerity" measures. But Osborn merely doubled down on his failed policy, claiming that "tonight we have a stark reminder of the debt problems facing our country and the clearest possible warning to anyone who thinks we can run away from dealing with those problems."

The ruling coalition government, made up of the Liberal Democrats and Conservative parties, has taken a hostile view to welfare provision. Institutions such as the National Health Service have come under attack. Imposing a strict plan of austerity with the most recent measures being laid out in a now notorious Welfare Reform Bill, the Coalition has repeatedly stressed such actions are necessary to restore economic stability.

Moody's own credit research analysis stressed that

Django Unchained

Django Unchained is a Quentin Tarantino movie and thus, by definition, a bloody movie. There are horrific close-ups of violence in the latter part of the movie. But the reason that the movie has struck such a chord among millions of viewers is not the violence, but the type of violence that it is.

In the movie, we see the daily violence of the slave system: slaves being force-marched across a desolate countryside, barely clothed, and in shackles and chains. We see slaves being whipped for having the effrontery to try to run away from their "owners." We see a slave being torn to pieces by dogs for committing the same "crime." Tarantino has done the people in the U.S., especially young white people, a favor in bringing to light the barbarity of the slave system.

The movie is a reminder of the brutality and violence of the slave system, a system where men casually talk about buying and selling other human beings. It is also a reminder that, throughout the history of slavery and even today, there have been courageous Black men and women who stood up for freedom and justice, some with arms in hand who answered the violence of the oppressor with the violence of the oppressed. *Django* is a movie about the violence of the oppressed.

Without giving too much away, I would say that the fictional character of Django combines the qualities of Nat Turner, Malcolm X, and Jonathan Jackson. Although it took a bloody civil war to bring an end to the system of chattel slavery in this country, Django does his part by bringing the violence of the slave owners home to them in a direct and unforgettable manner. As a white person viewing *Django*, I found myself cheering as Django used arms to bring havoc to the slavemasters and their hired guns. This is a great movie, a revolutionary movie. If you have a chance to see it, I strongly recommend you do so.

—Michael Gilbert

the decision to downgrade has more to do with an "anticipated slow growth of the global economy" than with Britain's internal market. Claiming that the UK's economic recovery has proven slower than that of previous recessions in the 1970s, '80s and '90s, Moody's noted the apparent inability of the government to meet its fiscal consolidation targets.

The agency also mentioned the possibility of a further downgrade should political commitment to debt recovery and consolidation prove lacking.

The loss of Britain's elite economic status comes as a stark reminder of the government's previous claims that their economic policy would be the way for Britain to retain its AAA rating. "Protecting the credit rating will not be easy," claimed Osborne back in 2010, "but the economic risk of not setting ourselves this benchmark is not one that I am willing to take...we will protect Britain's credit rating and international reputation."

The Welfare Reform Bill passed last month. In addition to further caps on assistance for those in and out of work, there is a measure aimed at reducing the availability of housing benefit for those deemed to be "under-occupying" their homes. **This so-called "bedroom tax" will force those living in a property with a spare bedroom to take a cut in their housing benefit. Those in under-occupied properties can face a reduction of up to 14% in housing benefit for single rooms and 25% for two unoccupied rooms.**

Considering that housing benefit is usually paid to those already on low wages, the unemployed or the disabled, the additional "tax" could provoke an exodus from social housing into the private sector.

DESPISED BEDROOM TAX

"Surveys tell us that around one-third of tenants will try and move, mainly to one-bedroom properties," said Hugh Owen, Director of Policy and Communications at Riverside Social Housing, "However, there is a national shortage of one-bedroom council and housing association homes, and many tenants will have no choice but to move into the more expensive private sector or stay put."

According to experts, economic reality does not point to the necessity of measures such as the bedroom tax. Martin Wolf, in an article for the *Financial Times*, said the decision by Moody's to reduce the UK's credit rating was "neither surprising, nor informative nor, in itself, damaging. But it is humiliating for the coalition government."

Wolf went on to state that the move represents the failure of the government's own attempts to slash the deficit; an opinion that represents diminishing faith in Chancellor Osborn's ability to manage the crisis.

"He, his colleagues and advisers were too confident about the strength of the economy and so about its ability to cope with fiscal tightening," wrote Wolf. "He could tighten harder; but then he risks another recession. He can tighten more gently; but then he is open to the charge of abandoning his plans. He will presumably stick doggedly to his plans and hope for the best."

—Dan Read

EDITORIAL

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the regional tinderbox.

Obama's State of the Union address contained thinly veiled military threats against both North Korea and Iran. He did not mention the growing U.S. military presence across Africa. The new war in Mali accelerated its spread, with a drone base opening in Niger. Drone installations had already been established in Ethiopia and the Seychelles, and a base for special operations forces in Kenya. The steadily expanding permanent U.S. base in Djibouti serves as a hub for drone missions in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, and hosts other military aircraft and special ops forces.

NEVER-ENDING WAR

The fact is that, while Obama boasted in the State of the Union "that America will complete its mission in Afghanistan and achieve our objective of defeating the core of al Qaeda," his administration still claims war powers based on the 2001 authorization of force by Congress—essentially the declaration of a never-ending "war on terror."

Those war powers apply in every country, including at home. They range from indefinite detention by the military to carrying out executions by drone; U.S. citizens and others can be designated as "enemies" and dispatched without charge or trial. In this sense, Guantanamo and Bagram show us our future.

The state's ever-growing arsenal of surveillance and repression shows how seriously the rulers take the threat of revolt from below. They have not forgotten that the global economic crisis of capitalism is not over, nor have they forgotten that the Arab Spring's revolutions opened up a new period of mass self-activity that spread to all continents.

THE WAR AT HOME

For over a decade, the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks have been exploited to justify greater restrictions on dissent and on any kind of social movement. One area of almost seamless continuity between the Bush and Obama administrations is the use of the label "terrorist" to justify infiltrating and disrupting movements like Occupy and entrapping activists in violent plots hatched or fabricated by police spies. Barriers to warrantless wiretapping, to ever-expanding surveillance, to tracking our every phone call and email, are crumbling.

Gun-toting Tea Partiers are given more leeway than sign-carrying Occupiers; nonviolent peace groups are more likely to be listed as possible terrorist organizations than are abortion clinic bombers and "white nationalist" groups calling for the President's assassination.

Where Obama has exceeded Bush and all other Presidents is in silencing whistleblowers. After taking office, he announced there would be no investigation or punishment of those who tortured detainees, of officials high and low who oversaw the torture, of lawyers who wrote the memos justifying torture—even of the CIA officers who destroyed videotapes of torture after the White House ordered their preservation.

The one person who was prosecuted was the whistleblower John Kiriakou, who confirmed to reporters the use of waterboarding. In January he was sentenced to two and a half years in prison.

Whistleblower Donald Vance gave the FBI evidence that his employer, a private security firm in Iraq, was conducting illegal weapons trading. Vance and co-worker Nathan Erthel were arrested and tortured by U.S. troops. The Obama administration convinced a federal appeals court to dismiss their lawsuit against former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Again, the torturer is exonerated and the torture victims are kicked to the curb!

Targeted for destruction is Wikileaks. A sealed indictment has been prepared for its founder, Julian Assange, according to a leaked memo. Jeremy Hammond has been jailed awaiting trial for nearly a year, charged with leaking documents from private security firm Stratfor, which spies on activists.

Army intelligence analyst Bradley Manning—the biggest source of leaked information, which exposed killings of Iraqi civilians and what the *Guardian* newspaper in England called a "portrait of a chaotic and failing war" in Afghanistan—languished in prison for nearly three years without trial, much of that time in degrading, inhumane conditions that could be called torture.

On Feb. 23, 70 demonstrations were held in several countries to mark 1,000 days of Manning's confinement without trial. Like Manning himself, his supporters are fighting against repression at home at the same time they are fighting against the wars being waged abroad to maintain a global system of exploitation.

There are two worlds in every country, of the rulers and the ruled. The rulers' permanent war is aimed at crushing challenges from below here as much as it is aimed at challenges from abroad. The only alternative to that state of war is tearing up this degenerate society root and branch and building a new one, abroad as well as at home.

WORLD IN VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

Pope Benedict XVI's sudden resignation announcement on Feb. 11 took the world by surprise. It is the first time in almost 600 years that a Pope has decided to quit. He has announced that he will continue to live in the Vatican, bearing the title "Pope emeritus," and "continue to serve the Church through prayer."

It is likely that the ongoing scandals of abuse by Catholic clergy and irregularities involving the Vatican Bank helped the former Joseph Ratzinger make his decision. He was not a natural public figure, being more comfortable in manipulating behind the scenes. But it was his failure to take action on the abuse cases that he knew about, and the public's knowledge that he knew and did not act, that made him singularly poor as a Church figurehead.

Barbara Blaine, president of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), said, "I would hate for him to be remembered as someone who did the right thing because from our perspective, Pope Benedict's record has been abysmal." While some abuse victim advocates are pressing for Ratzinger to be tried in the International Criminal Court, that is unlikely for many reasons, not least because he will retain diplomatic immunity living in the sovereign Vatican City state, much

Colombia murders

Demetrio López Cardenas, 33 years old and a father of three, a community leader in La Cauca, was murdered Feb. 23. He was shot several times while on his way to an appointment in the town of Buenaventura, near Cali.

Buenaventura, Colombia's largest port, is a poor community, but rich in natural resources. It has seen almost 1,400 killings in the last six years, with many more people disappearing. Violence and human rights violations have displaced thousands. Recently violence against women, community activists, and port workers has increased as the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement is implemented. It is not uncommon to find dismembered bodies in the street.

Some activists suspect there is more at work than the drug trade and guerrilla war. "What is at the root of this violence is not only drug trafficking, it is territorial control of the municipality, it is a scare tactic to get people to leave and move into rural areas so mega-projects can have free rein. The mobsters, allied with some businessmen, want to get people to leave in fear so they can buy cheap and then do good business," said one.

The Human Rights Team of the Black Communities Process has called upon the Colombian Attorney General's office to identify and prosecute those responsible for Demetrio Lopez's killing. "Impunity cannot remain the mantle that covers the threats and killings of community leaders and other Colombians in places like Buenaventura." Last year dozens of human rights activists were killed in the north coastal region of Colombia.

On Feb. 16, in Codazzi, Angélica Bello died under dubious circumstances—authorities claim suicide; her colleagues dispute this. She and her family had been threatened for years owing to her defense of women victims of sexual abuse by paramilitaries. An Amnesty International spokesman said, "Angélica's death is yet another dark reminder that, unless human rights abuses are investigated and those responsible brought to justice, the authorities in Colombia will continue to send the message that such abuses are permitted."

Ex-Pope Benedict's reactionary career

as the late Archbishop Paul Marcinkus did during the Vatican banking scandal of the 1970s-1980s.

ATTACKS ON WOMEN, GAYS

Ratzinger's career has been distinguished by reactionary politics. As much as anyone, it was he who made sure that the reforms of Vatican II wouldn't lead to fundamental changes in the position of women—in his eyes, not fit to hold spiritual authority—or Gays, who were to remain in the closet. He retained a hypocritical and deadly opposition to both safe sex and birth control. For many of these opinions his only appeal was to prejudice—they were valid because this is how things had "always" been done.

Most telling was his opposition to Liberation Theology, which he did attempt to justify philosophically.

The future Pope's views of Liberation Theology were formed by his flawed and reactionary understanding of Marxism, and of Marx's roots in Hegel. It's likely that, like so many, Ratzinger never bothered to read Hegel's actual works. Thus, the idea of human liberation (and he saw its appeal) became for Ratzinger the basis of a mythology of political reaction. Rather than seeing freedom being proven real in the lives of his contemporaries, in the struggles against exploitation and imperialism in Africa and Latin America, he felt obliged to recreate the very alienation that Marx critiqued in the 1840s.

'ANTI-LIBERATION THEOLOGY'

Where Hegel saw Freedom as the basis of human history, Ratzinger saw the reduction of humanity to necessity and unfreedom. Like a typical post-Marx Marxist, in fact, he wrote "[Hegel's] attempt at total logic ends in illogicality, in the self-dissolution of logic into myth" (*Introduction to Christianity*, 1968). But his positive view is mostly an undialectical inversion of Marx's critique of religion, in fact.

It's too bad Ratzinger was such a poor Hegelian. Hegel's account of the corruption of the Church is basically what he lived out in his failed public career and the wretched ending to his papacy. His consciousness embodied what Hegel critiqued as "externality," or that which is in "rigid opposition to self-conscious spirit" and thus "binds the spirit under an externalism by which the very meaning of spirit is perverted and misconceived at its source, and law and justice, morality and conscience, responsibility and duty are corrupted at their root."

Liberation Theology indeed represented that moment when religion was split into its two aspects, as



Ita Ford, Jean Donovan, Dorothy Kazel, and Maura Clarke (clockwise from top left) were killed by a death squad in El Salvador in 1980 along with their housekeeper and her daughter because they practiced Liberation Theology. Benedict XVI worked with Pope John Paul II to destroy Liberation Theology.

Marx pointed out, the religion of the oppressed and the religion of the rulers. It is what Hegel also referred to in his section of the *Philosophy of Mind* on "Mind Objective" concerning the attitude to a body of objective truth. The post-World War II world had caught up to that stage of philosophy, debating those once-esoteric issues as world-historic battles that continue today in the struggle against various forms of fundamentalism, wedded to state power, that crush the human spirit.

This philosophic failure was central to Ratzinger's life and thought. Indeed, for all his "intellectualism," in many respects he is closer to the pseudo-intellectualism of a cult leader like Lyndon LaRouche. Their published views on popular music, for instance, are so similar, and so racist, that it's tempting to ask which plagiarized from the other.

It would be nice to be able to forgive an old man his human failings, but it's impossible to forget the dead of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Rwanda—or the AIDS victims of Africa. He has left us our vision of horror and of solidarity. It was his choice.

The ex-Pope may try to return to his behind-the-scenes role with a new, perhaps more charismatic and less damaged Pope. He may feel that as long as the Catholic Church as an institution is seen as "too big to fail," he can drive it toward that smaller but "better," "purer" state that he prefers.

Arctic ice in retreat

The National Snow and Ice Data Center and NASA indicate that the extent of Arctic sea ice this January was the sixth lowest since satellite observation began. Air temperatures were 2 to 5 degrees Celsius higher than average across much of the Arctic Ocean (4 to 9 degrees Fahrenheit).

There is a linear rate of decline of sea ice cover of -3.2% per decade measured against the years from 1979–2000 average. Further, melting of the Greenland ice sheet in 2012 exceeded all previous years of satellite observations. Temperatures were 1.5 to 2 degrees Celsius above average over most of Greenland's ice sheet.

The melting of Arctic ice holds many dangers, from rising sea levels to release of ancient methane frozen in permafrost and sea floors. There isn't a lot of time left to address global warming as it is, but the counter-productive actions now being taken by governments are hard to believe.

CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT DISASTER

The U.S., Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark are all seeking to develop the oil and natural gas reserves they expect to become available as Arctic ice retreats. Soviet-era polar explorer Artur Chilingarov is now shilling for Russian President Putin's claims on the Arctic Ocean floor. He claims that "Our economy today is largely based on what was developed in the Arctic—oil, gas, diamonds, gold—thanks to the Soviet Union's policies of exploring and producing there. But back then we did not go into the sea. Resources are not endless and our task now is to leave future generations the same chances of economic stability as the Soviet Union left us."

It should be noted that the state-capitalist "Soviet Union" collapsed from within; was an environmental disaster area, from Chernobyl to Chelyabinsk; and left Russians with an average life expectancy of only 66.5 years (60 for men) as compared with 79.8 years in the European Union. Like the U.S.'s lust for tar sands oil and fracking, this kind of "development" is a local and global catastrophe in the process of happening.

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

News & Letters was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcat strikes against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signaled a new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. *News & Letters* was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910–1987), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, became Chairwoman of the

National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907–83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya's works, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* (1958), *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973), and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa.

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels. In light of the crises of our nuclearly armed world, it becomes imperative not only to reject what is, but

to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a new Humanism and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as Marxist-Humanism. This is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*.

Dunayevskaya's philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya's original 1953 philosophic breakthrough

and her final 1987 Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead." We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our *Constitution* states: "It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking. Send for a copy of the *Constitution* of News and Letters Committees.

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

"Human power is its own end"—Karl Marx

Vol. 58 No. 3

MAY-JUNE 2013

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WORKSHOPTALKS

Judging workers for control and profit

by Htun Lin

California's notorious Three Strikes Law took any human judgment out of sentencing by mandating 25 years to life for a third conviction, even for something as inconsequential as a stolen pizza or bike. California's prison gulag grew astronomically as courts became machines denuded of a judge's discretion.

The prison system itself became an even more abusive criminal monster, now under the supervision of the courts. The unintended consequences became so extreme that a new proposition just passed in California to give judges some discretion to reevaluate sentences for non-violent third strike offenses.

Mechanical justice took on a new angle with the advent of ubiquitous video-surveillance cameras at traffic stoplights. Computer-generated identification is a gold mine for municipal revenue enhancement, churning out tickets at \$500 a pop for technical infractions like not coming to a full stop before turning on red.

New digital surveillance technology provides precise evidence of technical guilt. With no wiggle room, there is no way for human judgment to catch up.

The phenomenon of human beings losing a race with machines is especially pernicious in the health-care workplace. The computer has become the virtual boss of everyone in the shop, by setting the pace of everyone's job.

PROFIT MOTIVE FIRST AND LAST

Advanced digital technology, touted for its far-
continued on p. 3

Thatcher is dead, Thatcherism persists

London, England—They gathered openly, in the streets, in the hundreds. They shouted. They cheered. Flags were waved, music was played. Yet this was not just another Belfast parade in the name of Republican pride. Far from death being a solemn occasion, the demise of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the so-called "Iron Lady," was a cause for celebration.

Some may, with good reason, find the celebration of any death to be in bad taste. As a self-proclaimed man of the "centre left," former Prime Minister Tony Blair lashed out against such celebrations, as did the current leader of the Labour Party opposition, Ed Miliband. And yet what prompted people to come cheering out into the streets in places as distant as Glasgow, Brixton, Belfast and Bristol warrants attention.

Plenty of others have gone into great detail on the full catalogue of Thatcher's crimes, from the crushing of the National Union of Mineworkers to her cozying up with dictators of all stripes, even supporting the vile, racist regime of South African apartheid. On this score alone, it seems inevitable that Thatcher's death would hardly be mourned by a great many people.

THE PERSONIFICATION OF CAPITAL

But what is vitally important is to see these abhorrent policies for what they are—not the product of a deranged personality now gone, but the product of a political and economic system in its own right.

Thatcher is said to have had conviction. Granted, she had a certain determination as to be able to identify enemies and go after them. Whether that was trade unionists, ethnic minorities, Argentinean soldiers or even leftists suffering and dying in the prisons of
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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Draft for Marxist-Humanist Perspectives, 2013-2014

Capitalism's violence, masses' revolt show need for total view

The world today is riven between the creativity of masses in revolt and the violent degeneracy of counter-revolution, whose destructiveness even extends to the revived specter of nuclear war two decades after the collapse of the USSR. Such is the degeneracy of the globalized capitalist system, laden with destructive forces and sunk into structural crisis. The deep crisis is seen in the U.S. and abroad, economically, in unemployment and poverty, homelessness and hunger. It is seen politically, in new laws attacking workers and women, and new outbursts of racism. It is seen environmentally, with the advance of climate disruption and fake capitalistic solutions. It is seen in thought, as the lack of philosophy, of a total view, hampers the development of struggles from the U.S. to the revolutions of the Arab Spring facing counter-revolutions.

I. Capitalism's many crises

A. Toward the nuclear brink

The bellicose acts of both the U.S. and North Korea confirm how ready both are to risk nuclear war.

It may be true that neither side desires to plunge into such a nightmarish disaster. Yet each has repeatedly pushed closer to the brink. North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un held missile and nuclear bomb tests, repudiated the Korean War's 60-year-old armistice, and restarted a shuttered reactor to produce nuclear weapons fuel. He threatened to bomb South Korea, Japan, the U.S. and Guam. Secretary of State John Kerry declared, "North Korea will not be accepted as a nuclear power"; the U.S. expanded its annual joint military drills with South Korea, adding bombing runs by nuclear-capable B-2 and B-52 warplanes.

The Korean Peninsula has been militarized since World War II ended. Europe and Asia were divided into spheres of influence of the two superpowers, Russia and the U.S. After the Korean War and the collapse of the USSR, the division of Korea persisted, with rising power China as North Korea's remaining ally.

North and South Korea have two of the world's largest standing armies. The North deploys approximately 700,000 troops, 8,000 artillery systems and 2,000 tanks close to the South, ready to strike. Its regime maintains not only its large military but its hold on power through its "military first" policy.

The superpower U.S. has 28,500 troops in South Korea, with another 53,000 based in nearby Japan and 55,000 more in Hawaii and Guam. And this is before the U.S. has executed its "pivot to Asia" to confront China's regional strength. At the same time, China is using nationalism to try to divert widespread internal discontent, revolt and strikes, and has its own imperialist designs to control supplies of strategic resources like oil and rare earths. China has acted ever more aggressively in territorial disputes with several other Asian nations over resource-rich uninhabited islands in the Pacific. Its naval vessels recently confronted ships from both The Philippines and Japan.

Long before North Korea built its first nuclear weapons, the U.S., Russia and China had intercontinental missiles aimed at each other. The recent events are a harsh reminder that the end of the Cold War did not end the nuclear threat to humanity. The fact is that nine countries are now nuclear-armed, with about 16,000 warheads in U.S. and Russian stockpiles.

Only the U.S. has intentionally used atomic weapons against civilian targets. Such weapons are one part of the world's overwhelmingly largest armed forces. De-

This special issue carries our Draft Perspectives Thesis, part of our preparation for the national gathering of News and Letters Committees. We publish it because our age is in such total crisis, facing a choice between absolute terror or absolute freedom, that a revolutionary organization can no longer allow any separation between theory and practice, philosophy and revolution, workers and intellectuals, "inside" and "outside." Join us in discussing these Perspectives.

spite recent budget cuts, the U.S. still spends more on its military than the ten next biggest militaries combined.

The fact that some in South Korea now call for construction of their own nuclear weapons illustrates the lie inherent in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It calls for nuclear-armed nations to pursue disarmament, but in reality acts as a framework for proliferation. The show of weapons reduction really amounts to arsenal modernization. This is in keeping with an international order in which not only do nations compete with one another, but a group of industrialized countries continuously appropriates natural resources and unpaid labor from the majority of the world's population.

The civilian nuclear energy industry was created

to provide a "peaceful" cover for the nuclear-industrial complex. The civilian industry enables proliferation to continue. In the wake of Fukushima's meltdowns, the people of Japan are the latest victims of the "peaceful" side of the complex.

Not only in Korea but in South Asia the specter of "limited nuclear war" has been raised, as if it is a realistic or sane prospect. In January the Indian government warned Kashmir residents to prepare for nuclear attack at a time of sporadic fighting between the Indian and Pakistani armies in Kashmir.

Brinkmanship cannot be dismissed as mere show. Going over the brink can happen easily where so many weapons, both conventional and nuclear, are in position, whether in Korea, Kashmir, or the Middle East. Even more so where conflict has an objective basis in competition over resources like oil, trade routes, and territory, in the context of the global competition between the U.S., Europe and China, exacerbated by the global structural economic crisis. At the same time, one of the rulers' main weapons against revolt by the masses is militarism, which ratchets up the risk of war.

B. Europe's economic crisis and revolt

Capitalism's utter moribund degeneracy is seen not only in threats to humanity's future from nuclear weapons and climate change, but also in the continuing economic crisis. High unemployment and homelessness persist in the U.S. and Europe, and the world food crisis continues. The UN estimates that 10.3 million people could suffer food shortages in the Sahel region of Africa this year. One in six people in the U.S.—46 million, including one in four children—do not get enough food.

Europe is again in recession. Unemployment there has soared since the financial crisis, reaching 48.7 million in February. In Greece the unemployment rate hit a new high of 27.2% in January, triple that of four years ago. Youth unemployment was 59.3%. It is nearly as bad in Spain, where youths held mass protests across Spain against high unemployment and poor working conditions. They even protested near its embassies in other countries, calling attention to the large number of youth forced to go abroad to find work.

A whole series of European countries has taken bailout loans in return for imposing harsh austerity measures: slashing social spending, pensions and

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Jae-hyun Kim leads a protest in front of the U.S. embassy in Seoul, South Korea, on Feb. 23, 2013, calling for the release of Bradley Manning.

WOMAN **&** REASON

Violence 'normalized'

by Terry Moon

We are living in contradictory times, especially when it comes to women's struggle for freedom. On the one hand you have a Women's Liberation Movement that has never been more radical, unified and global. On the other hand there is more repression, and the violence is more brutal and deadly than ever before.

In just the last few months we have learned of new atrocities: the gang rape and murder of 17-year-old Anene Booysen in South Africa; the 14-year-old Bangladeshi, Hena Akhter, who was charged with adultery after being repeatedly raped and brutalized by her older married cousin and ordered lashed by the local imam. She died after being hit 70 times. In India the attacks keep happening: a Swiss tourist beaten and raped by eight men at her campsite; a seven-year-old girl sexually assaulted at school. In the Maldives, a 15-year-old rape survivor has been sentenced to be whipped 100 times in public for "sex outside marriage" after being raped for years by her stepfather, who also murdered the baby she bore. The list never seems to end.

VIOLENCE NO LONGER WITHOUT PRECEDENT

Five years ago in March 2008, we wrote in these pages about the "obliteration" of women in Congo: "rape has become so brutal that not only are women's reproductive organs destroyed, but so are their digestive tracts. Some, lucky enough to find medical care, undergo six operations to repair their injuries....Doctors Without Borders...reports that 'acts of sexual violence accompanying the carnage have been without precedent in their frequency, their systematic nature, their brutality, and the perversity of the way they're planned and staged.'"

What only five years ago was an astonishing level of violence in Congo "without precedent," accurately describes the rape suffered by Jyoti Singh Pandey—the young woman in India whose rape and subsequent death galvanized massive demonstrations there—and the level of violence against women worldwide.

We are experiencing what some call a "normalization" of violence against women. You see that "normalization" in the USA when you have elected officials talk-

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis



Tunisian feminist Amina Tyler

On March 8, International Women's Day, 19-year-old Tunisian feminist Amina Tyler wrote: "My body is mine, not somebody's honor" across her nude breasts and posted her photo on Femen Tunisia's Facebook page. Islamic fundamentalists called for her death by stoning. Femen, based in Kiev, Ukraine, organized "International Topless Jihad Day" in several European capitals on April 4, Tyler's birthday, and burned an Islamic flag. This ignited a fierce debate between feminists who say all Islam is oppressive and Muslim feminists who say anti-Islamic sentiment gives fundamentalists ammunition to call feminism a Western import and others who say what Femen did was racist. In the brouhaha, support for Amina Tyler became lost.

* * *

April 7-13 was Meet Us On the Street: International Anti-Street Harassment Week. Over 100 groups, including anti-rape and domestic violence centers, campus groups, and international chapters of "Hollaback!" participated from 21 countries. Events included rallies, marches, and chalk parties for writing slogans on the sidewalk such as "I am reclaiming the streets where I was harassed." Activists handed out flyers such as "Six Things Men Can Do to Stop Street Harassment" and also discussed the fact that LGBT people are often victims of harassment.

* * *

On April 5-12 the student group Sexual Empowerment and Awareness at Tennessee hosted "Sex Week" at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville—a week of speakers and workshops about sexual health, preventing sexual violence, and topics on gender, feminism, and LGBTs. The university revoked funding for the program after state lawmakers criticized it as "offensive to Christians" and conservative newscasters ridiculed it. But supporters, including a local Unitarian church, helped raise more funds.

ing about "legitimate rape," or that it is impossible for a raped woman to become pregnant, or that if she does, that is god's wish and will. What is it but normalized if teenage boys in the heart of the USA think it's OK to rape a 16-year-old honor student who is unconscious, strip her, urinate on her and post pictures and videos of her—and of them brutalizing her—on the internet?

Rape is so accepted as normal that—even with all the stress on stopping sexual assault in the military—an Air Force commander felt both free and justified in throwing out an aggravated sexual assault court conviction of an Air Force fighter pilot. He reportedly "wanted to show the pilot community [which evidently in his mind included no women] that he had their backs."

RAPE AND THE LEFT

Nor has the Left escaped this normalization of violence and rape. That at least partly—and only partly—explains how the rape of a teenage British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) member by a Party big shot was dealt with in such a disgusting manner that it has brought scandal and mass flight from that Party. The case was tried by the SWP, with friends of the accused doing the investigation. Surprise, surprise, they decided that the young rape victim had not proven her case. As in a bourgeois trial, the woman was treated like the accused: questioned about her sexual history, her drinking habits. She was the one punished, banned from speaking at the party's 2012 conference. SWP members who had questions about what amounted to her prosecution were expelled from the Party for discussing it among themselves on Facebook; any others who objected were charged with being guilty of "bourgeois morality" and of capitulating to feminism. This is another way that feminism was presented by the leadership of the British SWP as an evil.

The Left in this case, which is supposed to be about the transformation of society, decided to try to save the reputation of their organization and its leadership and sacrifice a teenage girl. Whatever principles they may have had are thoroughly destroyed. What they accepted as normal was: the girl was lying, the sex had to be consensual (although sex between those with power and those without in any organization is always questionable as "consensual"), feminism is bad, and anyone who questions our authority is the enemy.

The escalation of violence is not happening in a vacuum. It is at least in part a response to women's increasing demands for freedom, demands to be treated as whole human beings who are determined to change their reality.

Be it in Egypt, Tunisia, other Arab Spring nations; India or the U.S.—in fact anywhere in the world—there can be no turning back, no retreat for women. The barbarity of the present makes clear that what is a necessity is for women's demand for full freedom—for full personhood—to be an articulated, nonnegotiable revolutionary demand. Today's reality shows that nothing short of a deep and total revolution that can transform all human relationships will mean women's freedom.

Rallies for equal pay

Chicago—On April 9 rallies were held across the U.S. to mark the day women's earnings catch up to what men's were at the end of 2012. I attended the rally at the Daley Plaza. Speakers included elected officials, leaders of business and professional women's organizations and heads of NGOs. Statistics regarding equal pay for equal work are even worse for Black women and even worse than that for Latinas.

There was a call to tell truth to the lies that the reason women earn less is because they choose to work in jobs that pay less (blame the victim) or that women choose to work fewer hours to take time off to raise a family.

The truth is that traditional "women's work" jobs pay less because of discrimination. There's no good reason a nurse's aide should be paid less than a construction worker except that nurse's aide jobs have historically been held by women. As for the fact that women take time off to raise a family, this ignores entirely that most men do not do their share of child raising, so women are forced to be the primary caregiver.

A recent American Association of University Women study, "Graduating to a Pay Gap," explores the pay gap between male and female college graduates working full time one year after graduation. They conclude that: "in 2009...women one year out of college who were working full time were paid, on average, just 82% of what their male peers were paid. After we control for hours, occupation, college major, employment sector, and other factors associated with pay, the pay gap shrinks but does not disappear. About one-third of the gap cannot be explained by any of the factors commonly understood to affect earnings..."

There was also a call to enforce the federal Equal Pay Act.

As I write this, all the Republican Representatives voted to block the Paycheck Fairness Act. What is wrong with equal pay for equal work?

—Sue S.

The Good News Club

The Good News Club: The Christian Right's Stealth Assault on America's Children, by Katherine Stewart (published by Public Affairs, 2012), is important because it describes a highly organized, well-funded attempt by the religious Right to destroy the U.S. system of public education and to indoctrinate children and youth ages four and up in Christian Nationalism.

Also known as Dominionism or Christian theocracy, this is the factually inaccurate notion that the founders of the U.S. intended for its laws and morals to be based on the Bible. Fundamentalists, who consider themselves the only true Christians, are to reclaim the country from Leftists who have brought it to a morally degraded state through concern for the rights and freedoms of everyone. The religious Right must control the U.S. government—and, in some versions of this ideology, the world—to bring about the longed-for Second Coming of Jesus and end of the world.

THE FASCISM OF THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT

Stewart accurately identifies this ideology as fascism and as part of a global rise of religious fundamentalism. Both indoctrinate youth in submission to authority, hierarchal gender roles, and suspicion of free, rational thinking and of differences in others.

Stewart describes how the religious Right's activism changed the court system's interpretation of the Constitution, leading to the religious Right's ability to set up numerous programs in public schools. It ironically co-opted the rhetoric of the Left and its concern for the civil rights of minorities and free speech, reinterpreting religious content as "speech"—a minority viewpoint that must be protected.

The religious Right provides lawyers, trained at its own law schools, to enforce these court rulings and intimidate resistant school administrators and parents. There's a chapter describing how the religious Right takeover of the Texas school board led to the adoption of national textbook standards with inaccurate Right-wing views of history and science.

Stewart attended conventions and leadership training seminars of religious Right organizations that set up programs such as the Good News Club in public schools. They use sophisticated corporate marketing techniques to infiltrate schools and indoctrinate children in obedience to authority and the idea that fundamentalist Christianity is the only way to heaven. The children are constantly urged to convert other children.

PARENTS' WISHES BE DAMNED

The promoters of these programs don't care that parents don't want them or that they tear apart communities and undermine support for the schools, just as they don't care that abstinence-only education does not work. Their stated purpose is to destroy the public school system and replace it with a system of government-funded, private fundamentalist schools.

At the end of the book, Stewart makes one brief statement that she thinks the religious Right will fail to turn the U.S. into a fascist "Christian Nation" because our society is "inherently open and pluralistic." However, her description of the systematic nature of this attack makes me worry they will succeed. Stewart does warn that, if we ignore this threat, Americans may lose universal access to education and our historically new tolerance of difference, which is enough cause for concern. Although Stewart does not discuss how to fight this threat, I hope that this book will be a wake-up call that the religious Right continues to be a threat for future generations.

—Adele

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New York fast food workers strike for living wage

New York City—More than 400 workers in fast food chains walked off the job April 4, the anniversary of the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., to demand a wage increase to \$15 an hour, better working conditions and the right to organize a union. In November, 200 workers had walked out. On April 4, in many places the walkouts had a spontaneous character. Workers left their jobs, some as early as 6:00 AM.

The organizer of the movement, Fast Food Forward (FFF), received statements of support from over 12,000 people. FFF noted that while the major fast food corporations made over \$200 billion in profits last year, many of their workers are paid so little that they have to receive food stamps to feed their families. (See *El Diario/La Prensa*.)

Fast food workers typically earn between \$10,000 and \$18,000 annually. A McDonald's worker said, "We deserve better. I have three kids, and on \$7.25 an hour I can't support them, and I can't give them the education I want them to have."

"I want respect, a better salary, to be able to join



a union without my employer intimidating me," said a striker who has worked at a Taco Bell in Penn Station for four years. "I am doing this for my family and for future generations of workers."

There is a rigid hierarchy in these restaurants, and bullying of employees by management is not uncommon. Two years ago, in New York, an employee was forced from a Subway restaurant after it was discovered that she was pregnant.

The fact that over 400 of these workers publicly defied their managers and struck, although they had no union representing them, is an indication that workers in this sector

are indeed ready to move. Even prior to having a union, workers at fast food restaurants can use the "work-to-rule" tactics of more organized workers to press their demands for higher wages and better working conditions.

But the key, as it has always been in any labor organizing, is the unity and the resolve of the workers, along with the support of the communities where these fast food places are located. A union of community activists who are free to leaflet and picket these establishments with the unity of the workers could bring substantial changes to this industry.

Will the trade union bureaucracy make a serious effort to organize the fast food sector? If unions do not, and do not take on the wholesale food industry and the

Portsmouth, England: unite against austerity

Portsmouth, England—Owen Jones, independent columnist and author of *Chavs*, joined people from across Portsmouth on March 20 to launch a community group to fight against austerity. The new organization, Unite Community Portsmouth, is part of Unite's organizing drive that seeks to re-establish links between the trade unions and local communities. Unite is Britain and Ireland's largest trade union, with 1.5 million members working across all sectors of the economy.

"We are going through the biggest squeeze in living standards since my granddad was born in this city in the 1920s," said Jones, who cites his grandfather's conversion to trade unionism precisely through his experience working in Portsmouth. "So I'm really glad to be here because of this fantastic initiative that Unite has set up."

The Unite Communities project has been instigated across the country as part of an attempt to tackle the loss of influence the trade union movement has over local areas. In the past, when workplaces were more centralized and tended to absorb much of the nearby labour force, it was easier for trade unions to play a direct role in community politics.

Changes in the industrial landscape, from outsourcing of manufacturing to the greater role played by smaller service-sector enterprises, have partially eroded contact between a community and the union movement. Unite initiated the community organizing drive to not only address such issues, but provide an additional platform for anti-austerity politics.

"It's a really exciting time," said Liane Groves, Unite Community National Organizer. "These groups are mushrooming. People are literally meeting in front rooms, local community centers and so on in order to fight these vicious (government) policies."

Gorves stressed that Unite does not wish to simply "bolt on" community groups to the rest of the union. "People have to decide how to do things themselves. What's important is that people stand together. The government is trying to divide us between 'scroungers' and 'strivers.' We need to fight against that."

Portsmouth has historically suffered with the decline of national manufacturing, having once had a thriving dockyard. With the advent of austerity policies, Portsmouth will be affected by the "black April" reforms, such as the unpopular bedroom tax.

"When you have people working mainly in the hire and fire service sector, you need to organize right across the community," said Jones, "That is the point we have always got to remember; our own power and our own strength. That when we can collectively organize, when we have confidence and courage in our own strength, then we can win. We can turn this around. We can stand together. We fight together and we can win this together."

—Dan Read

For further information, please contact danread.freelance@googlemail.com

megastores like Wal-Mart and Whole Foods, they are setting the stage for an America where the working class will no longer be unionized.

While the unions cite the high turnover of workers as an impediment to organizing, others contend that the work force in the fast food chains is now more stable, due to the economic reality that people no longer have the option to quit one job and get another one relatively easily. This enforced stability could provide unions with an opportunity to make inroads into this sector.

Capitalists want a return to the 19th century, when unions and strikes were illegal and crushed by the brute military force of the State. If organized labor does not see that expansion as vital, it will not survive in its present form.

—Michael Gilbert

Trade Fair workers fight expanded lockout

Queens, N.Y.—The March lockout of all unionized workers in the meat department of the Trade Fair supermarket in Astoria has now extended to all nine Trade Fair locations in the borough of Queens, affecting over 100 workers. They were penalized because they wore buttons declaring union pride, and because they were resisting efforts to bring in non-union workers after rejecting a proposed contract which would have cut back their hours and reduced or eliminated benefits.

After at least one belligerent encounter between the workers and management, and a brief walkout by the workers, all the workers found themselves locked out of their jobs. Big banners outside the store, put up by management, called the locked-out workers "strikers," and accused them of disrupting store activities.

Spirits have been high on the picket line. The workers received support from Occupy Astoria and other locals of the The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), the Hotel Workers and politicians. On April 1, Councilman Jimmy Van Bramer joined a crowd of rallying meat department workers of Local 342 at the Long Island City Trade Fair location.

There was also a rally at the East Elmhurst location of Trade Fair, with more than 80 participants. The workers, most of whom are Latinos, have received coverage of their fight in the leading Latino newspaper in New York City, *El Diario/La Prensa*.

COPS HARASS PICKETERS

During shopping hours at the Astoria store, union members stand behind a police barricade, monitored by a squad car from the local precinct, passing out fliers to community residents and potential customers asking them to not shop at the store. Store management has used its clout with the cops, so workers are forced to stand between two barricades at a distance from the store entrance, although there have been no reported complaints of obstruction of business.

Like so many other protests here, the police do everything in their power to minimize the impact of the protest. But there has been a substantial decrease in people buying from the supermarket. Union activists report other significant successes in their campaign, including management taking down the anti-union banners it had plastered all over the front of the store.

Local 342 has filed several unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) against the company, including intimidation, threats of termination, harassment and coercing of union workers and representatives for exercising their rights as union members. Trade Fair hired replacement workers for all nine Queens supermarket locations amid the lockout. As far as UFCW Local 342 is concerned, this practice is illegal, and those charges have also been filed with the NLRB.

"I need to work. I have to pay my bills, pay my rent," said a mother of three who has worked in the meat department for 23 years. "That's why I need my job back."

OWNER OUT OF CONTROL

One woman stated that workers who have been with Trade Fair as long as 25 years have been locked out. Management has been verbally harassing the picketers at various locations. One union member said that the owner of Trade Fair, Frank Jaber, screamed in her face.

Trade Fair workers in a different UFCW local have come out on the picket lines during their breaks to show solidarity with the locked out workers. A delegation from Communications Workers Local 100 also joined the picket line outside one of the stores.

Locked out workers are receiving more and more support from the community. People going by the 30th Ave. store in Astoria are expressing more support for the workers, and the number of people boarding the bus with Trade Fair bags is decreasing. Trade Fair management is finding itself more isolated. The pressure is on. Time is on the side of the workers.

—M.G.

WORKSHOPTALKS

continued from p. 1

reaching precision, was originally promoted by HMO advocates during the healthcare reform debate as a way to enhance healthcare delivery. But when deployed by corporate interests, it is really about cost-cutting and revenue enhancement.

Doctors at the HMO where I work are not only facing ever-increased speedup, but also are monitored by the computer. Because their workloads have become so huge, often doctors are caught making a choice between charting duties or taking care of the next patient.

A doctor's daily routine has been profoundly transformed through ever-increasing speedup and mechanization. Karl Marx warned us that the capitalist will increasingly transform every single profession in society, driving them into the ranks of proletarians, even professions hitherto considered sacred, from men of letters and jurists to teachers and doctors.

For HMO accountants and administrators, foremen of the modern healthcare assembly line, charting is a "cover your behind" legal matter as well as a way to speed revenue recovery. They instituted a sort of scarlet letter punishment method, publicly announcing that a doctor has been suspended due to a backlog of incomplete charts.

It was shocking to see so many doctors, whom I have known for many years as life-saving dedicated professionals, treated in such a demeaning way. Doctors too have joined the ranks of "indignant hearts" that once belonged only to nurses, housekeepers and other rank-and-file healthcare workers.

FIND SCAPEGOATS

We frontline workers know that much of what is called charting has little to do with patient care, but is monitoring the legal and financial aspects of care. Real and chronic systemic deficiencies are covered up, while individual employees, whatever their skill level, become scapegoats.

Everyone—doctors, nurses, lab techs, aides, clericals—is sped up to the point where mistakes are inevitable. The mechanized investigation, discipline and training, instituted to deal with mistakes, has less to do with resolving them than with protecting the company's legal and financial bottom line.

Punishment is meted out based on precise surveillance data, leaving no wiggle room. Human interpretation of data has been wrenched out of the process, as well as the spirit of the regulations and guidelines that were written supposedly with healthcare in mind.

Recently, the California Department of Health issued a sanction against Kaiser when its investigation, triggered by patient and staff complaints, determined that the HMO systematically denied patients access to prompt and adequate mental healthcare. Patients are corralled into group therapy to manage short staffing and other cost cutting policies.

The computer with its air of objectivity has come to dominate human beings. The usurping of human judgment pervades all of society, from healthcare and education to manufacturing and the judicial sphere. Human empathy and understanding have been replaced by automated thinking that mimics the computer. Reclaiming our own minds is a step towards human freedom.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF

RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: Sixty years ago Raya Dunayevskaya first articulated what she later called "the philosophic moment" that shaped her whole body of ideas. We present the Foreword to the original 1955 pamphlet, the first publication of News and Letters Committees, a mimeographed edition of Lenin's "Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic" and Dunayevskaya's 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes. The original can be found in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection #12061. (For the text of the entire pamphlet, see #2431.) Footnotes were added by the editors.

Part I of those Philosophic Notes consist of extracts from Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks*. These were written in 1915, at the time the holocaust of World War I made a shambles of the world in general and of the "vanguard" (official Marxism) in particular. It was at this critical point in history that Lenin felt compelled to study Hegel's *Science of Logic*. Far from being an evasion of the political tasks of the moment, it was a recognition that the time demanded infinitely more than the mere counterposition of a correct political policy against a wrong political policy.

What sent Lenin to examine the very foundations of Marxism—its Hegelian philosophic base—was the very fact that he was so shocked by the German Social Democracy's voting war credits to the Kaiser that he considered the issue of *Vorwärts*, which announced it, as a forgery perpetrated by Imperial Germany, instead of the actual mirror of the Second International's thinking.

Those Notebooks mark the great divide in Marxism. They were Lenin's preparation for his writings on *Imperialism* and *State and Revolution*, as well as the actual Russian Revolution in November 1917.

This is the first English translation of the remarks which Lenin made to himself as he studied Hegel's *Science of Logic* and *History of Philosophy*. I made the rough translation of Lenin's *Notebooks* in 1948. It is impossible here to reproduce the whole text as it is a book unto itself, consisting mainly of Hegel's works, with underlinings of all sorts and side remarks and aphorisms by Lenin. I hope the extracts will send the reader to the entire text by Lenin as well as Hegel's *Science of Logic* itself.

In 1950, under the impact of the miners' strike sparked by automation (the continuous miner), I returned actively to the writing of a book on Marxism which I now called "the Lenin book" because I conceived Lenin's *Notebooks* as central to the work. I wanted a worker present at the oral presentation of the thesis because the whole point was that unless the most profound ideas of Marx were expressed so simply and directly that the average worker would understand, it had no meaning at all. Otherwise it would have lost all its purpose, for the new impulses can come from nowhere but out of the struggles, thinking, and aspirations of the working class—especially American workers.

Where Lenin, in 1915, could keep his philosophic discoveries in private notebooks, we could not do so in the 1950s. It did not matter in 1915 because by 1917 the Russian workers had, in actuality, transformed the old order. But now that Russia, far from being a workers' state, is the greatest tyranny on earth, we had to face the question that is in everyone's mind: what happens AFTER workers gain power? Are we always to be confronted with a labor bureaucracy? Our age has so matured that we must **begin** with the workers themselves participating in the working out of the philosophic, that is to say, total outlook. That is the reason the recent se-

On the 60th anniversary of Dunayevskaya's Philosophic Letters

Hegel's Absolute Idea is for workers

ries of lectures have been undertaken **before** the writing of the book.

Part II consists of an exchange of letters on Hegel's Absolute Idea, which I call the concept of a new society. They were written in 1953. That was the year of Stalin's death, on the one hand, and the East German Revolt, on the other hand. A new era of struggle for freedom opened with the East German revolt, and within a few weeks it was followed by a revolt in the slave labor camps of Vorkuta inside Russia itself. Clearly, Stalin's death symbolized the beginning of the end of totalitarianism. The maturity of the age could be seen in the fact that the average man on the street and the philosopher were asking one and the same question: **Can** man be free in this age of totalitarian bureaucracy? We leaped generations ahead when the workers in a satellite country and those in slave labor camps took matters into their own hands and thus illuminated the road ahead to a new society.

1950 had opened a new era in production with the first serious introduction of automation in the form of the continuous miner.¹ From the first industrial revolution, the newly-born factory proletariat gained the impulse to struggle for the shortening of the working day, and thereby established a new philosophy. "In place of the pompous catalogue of the 'inalienable rights of man,'" Marx wrote in his greatest theoretical work, *Capital*, "comes the modest Magna Charta of a legally limited working-day, which shall make clear 'when the time which the worker sells is ended, and when his own begins.' What a distance we have traveled!"

The second industrial revolution was being translated by the workers the world over into a new humanism. Never have they posed the question more clearly as not being one of material possessions nor annual wages but of conditions of labor in a fundamentally new way of life. Without this universal philosophic form, state capitalism as a tendency would remain economist and incomplete. Although we, as a state capitalist tendency, had been saying for years that we live in an age of absolutes, that the task of the theoreticians was the working out materialistically of Hegel's last chapter on The Absolute Idea, we were unable to relate the daily



Berlin, June 17, 1953—The people watch the "people's" police station burn.

struggles of the workers to this total conception. The maturity of the age, on the other hand, disclosed itself in the fact that, with automation, the worker began to question the very mode of labor. Thus the workers began to make concrete, **and thereby extended**, Marx's

profoundest conceptions, for the innermost core of the Marxian dialectic, around which everything turns, is that the transformation of society must begin with the material life of the worker, the producer.

In 1953, when we were preparing to come out with a paper [*Correspondence*] that would be a break from all previous radical papers, I turned to philosophy and saw in the Absolute Idea the breakdown of the division between theory and practice in the movement for total freedom. What was new was that there was a dialectic not alone in the movement from theory to practice, but **from practice to theory**. That, in essence, was the gist of the letters to Hauser,² the philosopher-designate, who, after demurring a day or so, came back, with her usual hyperbole: "I think that these notes represent **our** *Philosophic Notebooks*,

comparable to those of VL in 1915."

Johnson,³ the titular founder of the state capitalist tendency, however, had other ideas. He never acknowledged receiving the letter, and when Hauser came to him with enthusiasm for all the "discoveries" I had made, he managed to shut her up too. What had previously been a literary clique now became a philosophic clique as well.

The titular head of the state capitalist tendency, far from looking at the stage of production and stage of workers' revolt, was busy examining the "social personality" of "original characters" and the "uniqueness" of the great literary writers, to which the new humanism of the great East German Revolt played a secondary role.

It is high time to abolish the division between the "theoretical leaders" and "the rank and file" as well as between "the inside" and "the outside." While the form in which the ideas first evolved in the mind of the author is rough and even abstruse, no stage in the evolution of the book need be kept private. These notes and these letters are being published for all who are interested.

Detroit, Michigan
November, 1955

1. For an account of the miners' revolt against the new machine, the continuous miner, see Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya, *The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and The Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.* (Chicago, News & Letters, 1984).
2. "Hauser" was the organizational name used by Grace Lee Boggs in this period.
3. "Johnson" of the Johnson-Forest Tendency was the organizational name used by C. L. R. James. "Forest" was the organizational name used by Raya Dunayevskaya.

Constitutional scandal rocks Canada

A new book, *La Bataille de Londres* by Frédéric Bastien, has shaken Canada so thoroughly that in some ways it has become a different country. Bastien, an historian who teaches at Dawson College in Montréal, spent eight years researching in the United Kingdom because relevant documents of the Canadian Foreign Office in Canadian archives were almost completely redacted.

Bastien's book reveals how Margaret Thatcher and former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau collaborated to undermine democracy in the shaping of the "repatriated" Canadian Constitution of 1982, in some cases by using proxies. Bora Laskin, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, and Justice Willard Estey provided information to the British Foreign Office about the constitutional proceedings, and Laskin revealed the confidential discussions between the magistrates about the legality of "repatriation" to British officials.

Questions include the scope of intervention in Canadian affairs by high-level British government officials; the violation of the separation of executive and judicial powers; and questions about how deep these and possible other interventions were. This has been called a *coup d'état*, as it imposed a constitution on all of Canada without the consent of Québec, putting the entire Canadian Constitution in question.

The 1982 Constitution was never signed by Québec. It is detrimental to the rights of French-Canadians as it reduces French to a minority language and, in place of the principle of two nations within one, it establishes an abstract "multi-culturalism" which reduces everything but English to second place.

With the urging of the Québec Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Alexandre Cloutier, and former Québec Premier Lucien Bouchard, **the Québec National Assembly/Assemblée Nationale voted to urge the federal government in Ottawa to "open its books" on all that happened at that time.**

The crisis also puts Prime Minister Stephen Harper in a bind, as he has to choose whether to defend the 1982 Constitution, or use the scandal against Justin Trudeau, who may soon be his electoral opponent. Justin Trudeau is the 41-year-old son of former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. He has been described as having 21st century good looks and a 19th century mind.

Also, the New Democratic Party (NDP/NPD) voted overwhelmingly to remove almost all references to "socialism" and to "social ownership," and all "business unfriendly" language from its party constitution. Their new goal is "sustainable economic development." At their Convention, an Obama for America field organizer addressed the election readiness seminars about "cutting-edge" campaign techniques and how to mobilize support. The NDP/NPD is no longer relevant as a labor or social justice party. Former NDP/NPD (now a Liberal) Ontario Premier Bob Rae is a major cheerleader for the Keystone XL pipeline.

Last but not least, federal Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver, whose job is mainly to promote the XL pipeline, is touring Canada saying that climate fears are "exaggerated."

Canada is in crisis. Expect resistance and new voices for freedom from the people forced to live with it.
—D. Chêneville & Ti-Ouistiti

THE PHILOSOPHIC MOMENT

OF MARXIST-HUMANISM

by

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3. Letters on Hegel's Absolutes of May 12 and 20, 1953

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Newark high school students walk out



On April 9, over 500 Newark students walked out of the Newark Public Schools and marched to Assembly budget hearings to protest Governor Christie's draconian budget cuts. The Newark Student Union is demanding Newark's legally mandated share of funding instead of granting new tax cuts to big corporations.



by Suzanne Rose

A mentally ill graduate student at Cal. State Los Angeles was shot to death by police Dec. 8. The student had bipolar disorder and was off his medications. His parents say that the school knew the student was troubled. Twice that day the police were called to calm down Bartholomew Williams and succeeded. The third time was at his apartment where they went to take him in for a mental-health evaluation. Bartholomew was killed when he attacked police. There are known measures that could have been used to calm Bartholomew instead of shooting him.

* * *

A child with autism was found locked in a 3' x 3' cage in his parents' basement in O'Fallon, Mo., sitting in his own waste. Other children in the home said that the child was fed through the bars of the cage and was not let out to play. Facing felony child endangerment charges, the parents turned themselves in in March.

* * *

More than 20% of doctors in five major metropolitan areas told people with disabilities—who are more in need of routine medical services than most of us—to go somewhere else for their medical care. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, doctors are to provide "full and equal access to their healthcare facilities and services." But many doctors don't accept patients on Medicaid because those with disabilities need more time for their appointments and the Medicaid reimbursement rate doesn't take that into account. Even with private insurance many doctors are still unwilling to accept a disabled patient.

* * *

On March 30, around 3,000 people marched on George Square in Glasgow, Scotland, while another 1,000 assembled outside the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh to protest cuts to a housing benefit for those with spare bedrooms. The "Bedroom Tax" will reduce the housing benefit received by those who have a spare room in their home. The new UK Government policy will disproportionately affect disabled people and women. Many disabled use that spare room to store their medical equipment. One protester said, "10,600 people died last year within six weeks of their benefit ending." Many were unable to stay in their homes without that benefit and ended up homeless on the streets.

The inhumanity of solitary confinement

I went to jail for a year when I was 49 years old. One of the most impactful experiences was being placed in solitary confinement. Even though I was in there for only five days, I felt incredible psychological pain.

I thought I knew something about the topic when I went to a demonstration and then a legislative hearing on solitary confinement in California's prisons (see "California hearings on prison torture," March-April 2013 *N&L*). But I was unprepared for the effect it had on me. Its significance went well beyond my individual experience.

There was such solidarity among the people there, mostly families, supporting prisoners. They formed a community.

Their stories validated one another. A woman's loss of a husband, son or father goes to the core of what makes us human. They don't talk about it in academic terms. They feel it. They speak of losing a part of themselves. It was not different from a woman losing her husband in a war.

They all suffer an injustice. Each case we heard during the demonstration and the hearing was unique, yet they all complemented each other. The various stories showed a sensitivity to what is fundamental to our humanity.

The conditions of prisoners are horrible, beyond what anyone would call a "civilized" society. This is especially true of the Secure Housing Units (SHU). Taking away human contact takes away an ability to live, to be human. Prisoners in the SHU are not only taken away from society, they are also prevented from interacting even with those who share similar conditions. We know that withdrawal of a variety of sensory inputs has detrimental effects. Taking away human contact is

like taking away the air people breathe. One woman spoke of her brother, who killed himself. All the signs were there, but the prison did nothing. It's a surprise that more people in these circumstances don't commit suicide.

What came through at the demonstration was an inextinguishable hope, from people on the inside and on the outside who display a genius in expressing what would make life more just and human. They hoped as well that their loved ones would be released.

During the hearing state legislator Tom Ammiano recognized that the existence of SHUs does not affect only the prisoners but the whole society, not just in terms of cost, but in who we are.

In a country where one in six African Americans will spend time in prison, this is a widespread impact, a challenge to America.

The laws that allow a society to treat its weakest members inhumanely make that society inhumane.

If it does not fix this inhumanity, it **chooses** to be an inhumane society. It says who we are as Americans, what our values are.

—Ibrahim



Oakland, Calif.—One of many rallies, vigils, speakouts and conferences in solidarity with SHU prisoners and the possible resumption of their hunger strike on July 8, 2013.

Thatcher is dead, Thatcherism persists

continued from p. 1

Augusto Pinochet's Chile, Thatcher certainly made her mark. Unfortunately for those looking to elevate her to sainthood, the experience, as any impartial observer would agree, was entirely negative.

And yet successive governments, even ones formed by the allegedly pro-worker Labour Party, not only have seen fit to fall into line in paying their respects to the now departed "leader," but have retained many of her policies for their own benefit.

Take the infamous anti-trade union laws. The attempts to settle scores with the British trade union movement, which in 1972 humiliated the Conservative Party and played a part in the 1974 electoral defeat of Prime Minister Ted Heath, led to an attempt to bind so-called out of control unions to the state. The backdrop to such a move culminated in the famous Miners' strike of 1984-85, when pit closures and sackings were met by mass strike action from Scotland to South Wales.

The miners, despite heroic resistance, were ultimately defeated, in part via massed ranks of riot police—some now reputed to have actually been soldiers drafted in and draped in police uniform—in brutal confrontations such as the now infamous Battle of Orgreave. Such locales to this day are hotbeds of anti-Thatcherite sentiment, and yet the anti-union laws that followed remain in force, in the process binding British trade unions to an assortment of confused and bureaucratic measures, outlawing secondary picketing and even threatening unions with the seizure of strike funds should they fail to comply.

BLAIR CONTINUES THATCHERISM

Just prior to gaining the Prime Minister's office in 1997, Tony Blair, as an alleged man of labour, worked hard to reassure all concerned that such anti-union practices were here to stay. The soon-to-be Prime Min-

ister, who now stands as one of the most hated men ever to come out of the Labour Party, wrote in Rupert Murdoch's *The Times* that even after "the changes we do propose, British laws on trade unions will remain the most restrictive in the western world."

Jump ahead and we have yet another Conservative administration hell-bent on enforcing the kind of "free market," finance-friendly and big business policies Thatcher upheld. In foreign policy, the days of making alliances of convenience with human rights abusers, so ably demonstrated in the case of Thatcher and Pinochet—whom she credited following his 1998 arrest for human rights abuses as having "brought democracy to Chile"—have been continued.

Indeed, Britain maintains strong relations with a number of states well known for violating international human rights law, from the current governments in Iraq, Afghanistan and Indonesia to the autocratic House of Saud; the latter pair being favored customers for the UK arms industry. Additionally, in 2011 former Prime Minister Tony Blair, in his capacity as an "advisor" allegedly on how to win the Nobel Peace Prize, picked up a paycheck of 13 million pounds from President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, a nation that journalist and author Nick Cohen describes as an "oil-rich dictatorship, which shoots strikers, burns the offices of opposition parties and kills their leaders."

In this sense it's difficult to find a point where "Thatcherism" ceased to exist as a political practice, whether the Iron Lady herself was in or out of office. Now that she has ceased to be, celebrations may seem premature, assuming of course we are not merely celebrating the death of an individual, but the end of a form of politics that brought misery and suffering to millions.

—Dan Read

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WOMEN'S LIBERATION

The March-April 2013 *N&L* centers on Women's Liberation. At each stage it owes so much to the Black movement. When you cut that history off from recollection of your movement, you risk losing the idea of the movement. The Abolitionists gloried in being the means through which a movement against slavery expressed itself. They saw that as part of their own freedom.

David M'Oto
Bay Area

I escort at a clinic in Chicago that provides abortions. One day I noticed it was not even 7:00 AM and half the cars in our parking lot are from out of state: Michigan, Indiana, North Dakota. No one should have to travel so far for necessary healthcare.

Clinic escort
Chicago

A plan was adopted in the UN to combat violence against women. Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood strongly objected to it as clashing with Islamic principles and being against their culture. What they didn't expect is that the head of Egypt's delegation, Mervat Tallawy, had her own idea: "I believe in women's cause. I don't take money from the government. I work voluntarily. If they want to kick me out they can...Women are the slaves of this age. This is unacceptable, particularly in our region." Culture is no fossilized object but undergoes living development, especially in the process of revolution.

Reader
Oakland

Pope Francis just rubber-stamped Ratzinger's attack on U.S. nuns, confirming that three bishops—men, of course—supervise an overhaul of the largest group of American nuns. All this crap about a new Pope—he is the old Pope and the one before that, just in new clothes.

Revolutionary
Mexico

Dunayevskaya's essay, "The Black dimension and Women's Liberation as revolutionary Reason" (March-April *N&L*), does not use the expression she created: "The movement from practice is itself a form of theory." Yet the women's history she relates proves its truth. In stressing the importance of the "Black dimension" to Women's Liberation, Dunayevskaya makes the point that if that is not understood, then all "have failed entirely to grasp what is the root of theory, its true beginning." Theory begins with the movement from practice and it is Dunayevskaya's understanding of that fact that makes history, in her hands, an exciting and necessary experience.

Women's Liberationist
Chicago

LABOR AND FORCES OF REVOLT

The Chicago teachers' strike last September and the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) marching with parents in March against closing down neighborhood schools while opening charter schools has gotten the attention of teachers far from Chicago. We understand that more unions were prepared to join them in solidarity if the strike had continued, which was a major reason the mayor blinked. What impresses us is that the CTU leadership was a rank-and-file committee that has not turned against its members.

Teacher
Kansas

Labor reporter and activist Harry Kelber (1914-2013) passed away in March. He was active for over 80 years in the labor movement, often as a critic of the bureaucrats in charge, most recently as publisher of the internet newsletter *The Labor Educator*. With his own

READERS' VIEWS

history reaching back to Depression-era strikes, Kelber was able to keep his eye on the new as well. He said in a recent interview with *The Nation*:

"Organized labor should learn from Occupy that working people have to be involved in their own fate...I mean the fight against inequality has now erupted, and what the occupation of Wall Street has done at a very minimum is to make that an issue that will continue forever until there is some reasonable solution...I have in mind the Egyptian Spring. Workers will stand so much, and then rebel. I do have confidence that we will see that day. We are seeing some of it today."

Tim Finnigan
Illinois

Changes are occurring in popular mass struggle in the U.S. Young Latinos are increasingly voicing dissatisfaction with the so-called "Dream Act" and are demanding full amnesty. Latino workers are playing a vigorous role in working-class struggles. Many organizing drives are being spearheaded by Latinos, in the food industry, among carwash workers, and the occupation of Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago. Immigrants are losing their fear of deportation and are becoming a leading force in the class struggle.

Activist
Queens

ROGER EBERT

Roger Ebert was an important spokesperson for the disabled. Just by being himself he changed the negative perception of what it means to be disabled. Shortly after cancer surgery took away part of his jaw and his ability to speak, eat or drink, Ebert wrote in "I'm Not a Pretty-Boy Anymore":

"I was told photos of me in this condition would attract the gossip papers. So what?...I have been very sick, am getting better and this is how it looks. We spend too much time hiding illness. There is an assumption that I must always look the same....Being sick is no fun. But you can have fun while you're sick."

Suzanne
Chicago

AT THE MOVIES

I agree with Michael Gilbert ("Django Unchained," March-April *N&L*) that Quentin Tarantino has brought to light the barbarity of the slave system, but I don't see the movie as revolutionary. I always watch Tarantino's movies holding my nose, because his depiction of graphic violence makes me feel brutalized to the point of dehumanization, not revolution. It's important for revolutionaries not just to know, but to feel the violence that permeated slave society. But Tarantino does not take us beyond that. Our challenge is to transform that brutal culture into one where everyone's humanity is recognized and nurtured.

Susan Van Gelder
Detroit

I could not disagree more with Michael Gilbert's review. The length of *Django Unchained* is only the beginning of its faults. The violence vacillates from the cartoonish to the realistic. The enthusiasm with which Tarantino subjects his audiences to the brutalization of Black people is characteristic of his career. Slavery is the perfect backdrop for his obsession with violence and the brutalization of Black bodies. The first plantation scene was hard to distinguish from the set of an instant ice tea commercial: well-clothed Black people strolled arm-in-arm or swung from swings suspended from grand trees. The film's strong suggestion was

that brutality and racism were the fault of ignorant—read poor—whites, the sole source of such social evil. As a Black American, I object to this tale of revenge. Our struggle for liberation is one which seeks to extend liberty to all peoples everywhere. Despite how bloody awful this movie is, it was positive to position a Black woman as so valued that one would risk one's own freedom to go back for her. That kind of solidarity is what animates true revolutionaries. The question is why are movies being made by Spielberg and Tarantino on this period of U.S. history? We have yet to grapple with this ugly fact of American history. Both works are attempts to control the narrative around race, who Black and white people are. It is no coincidence that they were released during President Obama's second term.

Dee Perkins
Phoenix

The movie *42* about Jackie Robinson's ordeal as the first Black major league baseball player of the modern era in 1947 with the Brooklyn Dodgers, premiered in Kansas City, the location of the Negro Leagues' Museum and because Robinson had played for the great Kansas City Monarchs.



The movie publicity on Robinson's strength overcoming racist attacks still shortchanges his achievement by keeping history hidden. Blacks played in the majors until excluded 60 years before Robinson's debut, when Jim Crow laws negated Black gains achieved under Reconstruction. The postwar civil rights movement that pushed for the opportunity given to Robinson also forced the Los Angeles Rams in 1946 to hire Kenny Washington and Woody Strode after the National Football League had enforced segregation for 20 years.

Sports fan
Kansas City

BLIGHTS IN GAZA

Garbage collection in the Gaza Strip has become a real stinker of a problem. The mechanized portion of collection is hampered by the fact that 22 bought-and-paid-for garbage trucks have been held in Ramallah for three years because the Israeli government won't let them motor in Israeli territory. In addition, Palestinians are denied access to dumps near the border fence. Maintenance of the landfills and maintenance of machinery cannot take place because Israel will not allow building materials, tools or auto parts to be brought in.

January
Chicago

WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

The Memphis Police isolated the KKK who tried to rally downtown on March 30 to protest the removing of racist names of local parks. Cops also prevented the counterprotesters from getting near them. There were only about 50 KKKers, it was raining and their megaphone died so no one could even hear them. So it went well.

Jim M.
Memphis

FOLLOW THE MONEY

It came as no surprise that the Democrats in Oregon voted to assault the pensions of state workers. After all, this is the era of austerity. Everybody but the rich is being forced to live on less and receive less in social services. Here

in New York, there is only one hospital left which will do serious dental work such as extractions, and that is a public hospital with a very dubious reputation. Half the time when I contact my health insurance company to find out if they will pay for a procedure, the answer is no. Every day in the news all I read about is the Obama-proposed attacks on services for the poor.

Mother
New York

I work for a personal injury (plaintiff's side) law firm as a clerk. Recently the lawyers published an article stating that in a malpractice medical case, one piece of advice is to "follow the money." For instance, does a physician get the mandate to hold off certain medical care from low-income patients while being forced to do many expensive care procedures for wealthier patients? Are nursing home caregivers told to not spend time figuring out what is really wrong with a patient and just treat what is likely to be the cause? Isn't this another reason we should ask, "Why don't we have socialized medical care"?

Woman worker
Chicago

WHY READ N&L?

The truth is in the method. Many in the Left seem to have abandoned the revolutionary journalistic method of allowing the class to express itself via the paper. Their notion is that the paper expresses the views of the party to the class, as opposed to airing the views of the class itself as a means towards cultivating a revolutionary consciousness, which is my understanding of the *Iskra* method. That's what I think I see in *N&L*.

Friend of Marxist-Humanism
Britain

The review of *Escape from Camp 14* created heated discussions in Oakland. When some Leftists insisted that all anti-North Korean writings are just fabricated propaganda, I asked, "Since when do we call dynastic transfer of power 'socialism'?" During a meeting on consumerism another Marxist noted (sarcastically) that North Korea must be socialist, since there is no consumerism there.

Bob P.
Oakland, Calif.

VOICES FROM THE INSIDE

News & Letters is my "source" on the struggles of prisoners and workers here in America. We have more people behind bars than any other nation in the world. Yet we try and dictate to other countries about their prison issues. Wow!

Woman prisoner
Gatesville, Texas

Enclosed please find ten dollars for the book *Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya, and please renew the subscription to *N&L*. I regret learning that *N&L* is now published every two months as opposed to monthly, particularly during this present economic crisis which should be a main topic of discussion within its pages.

Latino prisoner
Terre Haute, Ind.

I hope my letter arrives and a donor is found so that I may continue to receive *N&L*. I always enjoy reading it. Please keep bringing to light those issues that the powers that be want left in the dark. Please keep getting the word out as to what is being done to the real power in America—the worker. Please keep being a thorn in the side (or back side) of all those that would stand on the heads of others. Your friend and comrade.

Man in a cage
Amarillo, Texas

TO OUR READERS: Can you donate the price of a sub (\$5) for a prisoner who cannot pay for one? It will be shared with many others.

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labor rights, firing government workers and cutting minimum wages. From Ireland to Greece, Spain to Portugal, each of these countries has experienced sustained revolt against austerity. In Italy a government cannot be formed, with no party ready to take responsibility for the austerity program after the people overwhelmingly rejected it. In Bulgaria protests and blockades toppled the government in February. In Portugal mass demonstrations on March 2 declared that the government does not represent the people and raised the slogans of the 1974 Portuguese Revolution.

Cyprus is the latest example, where last year the "Communist" then-president worked out a bank bailout deal. Leaked documents from the European Commission forecast that, under austerity, the Cyprus economy will shrink 8.9% this year and 3.9% more next year. The country is likely to plunge into depression with no foreseeable end. Large, angry protests forced the government to back down on its plan to seize 10% from everyone's bank accounts. Bank employees held a brief strike to protest likely pension and job cuts.

Slovenia may be the next country forced into a bailout. After the government started imposing austerity—at about the same time that evidence of official corruption began to surface last year—protests have spread across the country.

While discontent and revolt continue to be widespread in Europe, leaders of parties and unions have held back their full development by working to channel the opposition into narrow electoral politics and one-day strikes and protests.

C. Automation, joblessness in U.S.

Although the U.S. has not slipped back into recession, unemployment remains high. Poverty has skyrocketed, with 19 million at less than half of the official poverty line. Also, 70% of the 3.5 million jobs that have been created since June 2009 are low-paying, while half of the 7.6 million jobs lost during the year and a half before that were mid-range, paying \$38,000 to \$68,000.

It isn't just a matter of jobs being moved to China and India. Automation is taking its toll, and it isn't finished. Capitalist figures from former Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers to Silicon Valley businessman Martin Ford warn that advancing automation is likely to result in 50% to 75% unemployment. Ford adds:

"It must be acknowledged that this idea is quite similar to the predictions that were made by Karl Marx in the mid to late 1800s. Marx predicted that capitalism would suffer from a relentless 'accumulation of capital,' resulting in massive unemployment....If the arguments in [my] book prove correct, then we may be in the somewhat uncomfortable position of conceding that Marx was, at least in some ways, perceptive about the challenges the capitalist system would eventually encounter."¹

Foxconn in China—manufacturer of choice for companies like Apple and Amazon—deployed more than 10,000 robots last year, with a simultaneous hiring freeze, and has announced plans to deploy one million robots by 2014. Foxconn chairman Terry Gou famously declared about the company's 1.5 million-strong workforce, "As human beings are also animals, to manage one million animals gives me a headache."²

At the same time, ideologues are presenting automation as a solution to unemployment. "Robots have the potential to bring manufacturing jobs back to the U.S.," according to a March 2013 report to the Congressional Robotics Caucus. Some manufacturing has indeed been brought back to the U.S. However, the high level of automation implemented to compete with China and other low-wage countries reduces the number of jobs involved to a handful.

The broad and continuing impact of automation portends long-term high unemployment, decimation of better-paying jobs, downward pressure on wages, and impoverishment of the masses.

The latest trend in fragmenting and alienating workers is microtasking. Companies break down tasks that are not yet fully automated, posting small subtasks on web marketplaces where piece-workers anywhere in the world sign up to perform one for a few cents. The main marketplace is amazon.com's Mechanical Turk. Working from home and sometimes not knowing who has hired them, quick workers may make \$1.50 an hour with no benefits or protections.³ Mechanical Turk handles over 500,000 workers in 100 countries, about 70% of them women, isolated from each other and from their employers, performing little bits of tasks on invisible assembly lines.

Under capitalist relations, technological advances have the perverse effects of alienating and fragment-

ing work and throwing people out of jobs. This results from the dialectical inversion Marx pointed out: in capitalist production, it is not the worker who employs the instruments of labor, but the instruments of labor that employ the worker; dead labor dominates living labor.

Since the financial crisis hit in 2008, the capitalist press has had to keep admitting the cogency of Marx's analysis of capitalism, from *Business Week* to *Forbes* to *Time*.⁴ Still repeating their ritual denunciations of Marx and still trying to save capitalism from itself, though, they cannot allow themselves to grasp what Marx designated the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation—the accumulation of capital at one pole, with wealth for a minority, and of misery, unemployment and revolt at the opposite pole. Its operation is seen in the army of the unemployed and in the fall in the rate of profit. The fact that there is no prospect of any more than a weak recovery on the horizon is precisely because of capitalism's degeneracy brought on by its absolute general law. But the inevitable revolt does not automatically develop into social revolution that topples capitalism and creates the foundation for a new social order.

II. The politics of degenerate capitalism

The rulers are not about to sit back and let revolt freely develop. All sorts of reactionary ideas and attitudes have been ushered into the mainstream of politics and the media.

State governments like Wisconsin's and Michigan's have taken the lead in ramming through reactionary laws (see "Undoing Michigan election," Jan.-Feb. *N&L*). Recently passed anti-labor laws have already led to a sharp drop in unionization in states like Wisconsin and Indiana. Nationally, only about one in 15 private sector workers are in unions now. The state-appointed emergency manager of Detroit joins others in Michigan not only to deny democracy for majority-Black cities but to attack labor, African Americans and Latinos by dismantling union contracts, pensions, environmental protection and public education—as inadequate as all of those already were. (See "Detroiters organize," p. 11.)

On a federal level, the sequester's drastic cuts gave the Obama administration political cover to join the Republicans in imposing austerity on the U.S. President Obama followed up by writing cuts to Social Security and Medicare right into his budget proposal—**before** compromising with Congress.

Smarting from their losses in the 2012 elections, Republicans did appear to be in retreat on homophobia and the demonization of Latin American immigrants. A number of politicians changed their stance due to the historic shift in attitudes. Polls show that a majority favors legalizing Gay marriage, up more than 20 percentage points since 2004. However, the Catholic Church and the Christian Right are still crusading against LGBTQ people, and politicians still equate Gays with murderers and pedophiles. The mythical "traditional family" serves as a rallying point for patriarchal reaction that opposes any kind of liberatory movement.

Attempting to co-opt the Latino vote, many Republicans have muted their anti-immigrant rhetoric, though far Right groups like the Federation for American Immigration Reform remain influential enough to be featured on Fox News. Yet the record number of deportations—1.5 million in Obama's first term—reveals that, if anything, the treatment of undocumented immigrants has become more vicious under Obama than under Bush. Detention of immigrants also hit record levels, with 429,000 held in 2011. Human rights groups have lodged protests over the widespread use of prolonged solitary confinement on immigrants who were not even convicted of crimes. It is a form of torture.

Now a bipartisan immigration reform bill has a chance of passing. The bill, a compromise hammered out by power players in Washington without consult-

4. See "Marx to Market," by Peter Coy, *Business Week*, Sept. 14, 2011; "Karl Marx Explains the Problem with the Apple, Google No Poaching Conspiracy Allegations," by Tim Worstall, on forbes.com, April 6, 2013; "Marx's Revenge: How Class Struggle Is Shaping the World," *Time*, March 25, 2013, which held, "Marx's biting critique of capitalism—that the system is inherently unjust and self-destructive—cannot be so easily dismissed....the workers of the world may just unite. Marx may yet have his revenge."



The 200-mile March for Rights, Respect, and Fair Food by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in March 2013. Above, the first day of the march. Below, the last day.



CIVIL online.org/march/index.html

ing with the millions of people actually affected by it, lays out an absurdly long path to citizenship, which would take 13 or more years. Or maybe never, since that would only be implemented if tightened "border security targets" are met. It would not dismantle the repressive deportation and detention machinery. A number of rallies took place in March and April from San Francisco to Miami, with thousands in Washington, D.C. The demands were to legalize immigrants, reunite families, and end deportations and detention.

Immigrant workers' revolt has a new visibility and force in the last several years, not because the Republicans are worried about their votes but because immigrants showed their resolve in strikes and protests from the May Day 2006 strike/boycott to the 2010-13 eruption of "undocumented and unafraid" youth speaking out publicly at the risk of deportation. Immigrant workers from Latin America have been key to much recent labor militancy.

One example is the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' campaign to pressure Publix and Wendy's to sign Fair Food Agreements to help stop exploitation and slave labor of farmworkers. Their 200-mile March for Rights, Respect, and Fair Food ended March 17 with a rally of 1,500 farmworkers and supporters at Publix headquarters in Lakeland, Fla.

Despite lip service to Latinos and Gays, Republicans' hostility to women's freedom continues to deepen. Women not only are the first to suffer from the cutbacks in social programs, but are the specific targets of a whole raft of mean-spirited legislation aimed at controlling their lives. The blatantly unconstitutional anti-abortion laws passed by Arkansas, Kansas and North Dakota are just the tip of the iceberg. New laws have been cutting women's access to abortions in many states. Mississippi, Alabama and Virginia have passed TRAP (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) laws that threaten to shut down all abortion providers in those states by imposing incredibly expensive regulations, hypocritically justified as "protecting women's health" by politicians who would rather see women die than be able to get abortions. Most often, clinics that perform abortion also provide other vital health services for women, such as checks for cancer, birth control and AIDS testing. Anti-abortion ideologues do not care that closing down abortion providers means poor women are left without access to lifesaving healthcare.

Women are fighting the normalization of violence against women, as seen from their reactions to the Steubenville, Ohio, rape trial and the suicide of 15-year-old Audrie Pott in Saratoga, Calif., after being raped while unconscious. (See "Violence 'normalized,'" p. 2.) Whether in the U.S. or in the Arab countries, women are pointing out the need for fundamental social transformation and challenging actual revolutions to deepen. They are driven by frustration over continuing oppression and retrogression—and by the way women in the Middle East and North Africa have taken the historic stage in the uprisings and strikes of the last several years and then suffered a brutal backlash against their gains. (See "From India to Egypt to U.S., women fighting for freedom," March-April *N&L*.)

A. American civilization on trial

"In a word, the new human dimension attained through an *oppressed people's* genius in the struggle for freedom, nationally and internationally, rather than either scientific achievement, or an individual hero, became the measure of Man in action and thought."

— Raya Dunayevskaya,
American Civilization on Trial

The re-election of the first Black President could not hide the hollowness of U.S. democracy. Black masses have exposed that hollowness from the beginning, and indeed have put *American Civilization on Trial* (ACOT), which is the title of one of Marxist-Humanism's foundational works, first published 50 years ago.

On the U.S. scene, the reality under Obama, as under Bush, is that, in everything from poverty to unemployment, to imprisonment, to police brutality, to health, to attacks on women's autonomy, to the rapid restructuring of the educational system, African Americans are worse off than whites. While we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, one cannot help but notice that slave labor still exists in this country, both inside and outside of prisons; that the structure of our economy still depends on a superexploited layer of immigrant workers of this country not given the rights of citizens, as well as superexploitation of workers from China to Honduras to Bangladesh; that families are still being torn apart by armed agents of the state; that resisting this system of exploitation can

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1. Martin Ford, *The Lights in the Tunnel: Automation, Accelerating Technology and the Economy of the Future* (W. Sheridan, 2009), p. 237.

2. "Report: Foxconn Boss Compares His Workforce to Animals," by Damon Poeter, *PC Magazine*, Jan. 19, 2012.

3. "Dawn of the Digital Sweatshop," by Ellen Cushing, Aug. 1, 2012, *East Bay Express*, <http://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/dawn-of-the-digital-sweatshop/Content?oid=3301022>.

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land you behind bars, deported, or even dead.

From the police force to courts to prisons, the criminal injustice system remains a machinery of oppression and a focus of revolt. Youth of color, often targets of "stop and frisk" actions as well as killings by police (see "New Yorkers protest police murders," p. 11), are in the forefront of opposing them.

One of the 2012 election's features was the voter suppression effort aimed primarily at Blacks and Latinos, and the resistance it sparked. Coupled with that, Republicans used a phony narrative of victimization of whites plus gerrymandering to maintain partial control of the government. Now the Supreme Court appears to be on the verge of helping suppress votes by gutting the Voting Rights Act of 1965, with a decision anticipated in June. Many of last year's voter suppression efforts were only temporarily blocked by courts, and the expected Supreme Court ruling would restore other measures while sending a signal to racist local and state authorities to open the floodgates of disenfranchisement.

What *ACOT* shows throughout this country's history is that the real moves to establish true democracy and a fully new society have come from below.

Across the U.S. there are determined struggles over school closings, housing and healthcare cutbacks. In Chicago, Mayor Rahm Emanuel proposed to close 54 public schools, on top of years of school closings, mainly affecting Blacks and Latinos. Angry parents, students and teachers have rallied, sat-in in the streets and demanded answers in hearings. In many cities schools are being closed or privatized.

Obamacare has not ended struggles over health-care. In Chicago communities are still fighting the Mayor's closure of several mental health clinics. Sit-ins have also protested the closure of emergency rooms on the South Side. Four activists were violently arrested by University of Chicago police in January at a sit-in by Fearless Leading by the Youth, demanding the University's hospital reopen its trauma center to adults. They have been fighting for a trauma center on the South Side for three years since FLY founder Damian Turner was shot four blocks from the University of Chicago Hospital but taken ten miles away to die at another hospital.

As evictions and foreclosures continue at a fast clip, so do the struggles against them. Detroit, where the foreclosure rate is about one in every 500 homes, is one of several cities where anti-eviction groups, aided by Occupy, have successfully kept people in their homes when threatened with eviction.

All these struggles reflect the onslaught of austerity and privatization that hurts people of color the most.

As *ACOT* put it: "The elements of the new society, submerged the world over by the might of capital, are emerging in all sorts of unexpected and unrelated places. What is missing is the *unity* of these movements from practice with the movement from theory into an overall philosophy that can form the foundation of a totally new social order."

The question arises: Where is the total view? Again and again, struggles arise from the grassroots but are carried out without raising a banner of a totally new society, with new human relations in production, between the sexes, and more. Those who would limit the movement's reach have taken advantage of this to mislead.

Union bureaucrats succeeded in diverting the struggles in Wisconsin and Michigan into electoral channels. The "lesser evil" ideology shared by so-called Marxists and anarchists destroyed Occupy's solidarity with the Syrian masses. And at the very time that large numbers of U.S. Blacks and Latinos came out to resist the Right's attacks on voting rights, these same Left tendencies undermined Occupy's solidarity at home by substituting abstract revolutionism (claiming that "voting makes you complicit with the imperialist system") for the needed historic link to actual struggles—past, present, future—by Black masses to transform society.

B. Wars of the U.S.

Militarism has ever been one of the rulers' favorite tools to sap revolt by the masses. There is no end to war in sight so long as capital drives society.

President Obama has set 2014 for the end of the war in Afghanistan. The Afghan people have every right to fear a recapitulation of what happened after Russia's withdrawal in the early 1990s: no end to war, but a deadly struggle for power among multiple war-

lords, including the Taliban; and more exploitation and violence directed at women, youth, workers, and national minorities. Yet many look forward to the departure of an occupying force that has committed all too many atrocities, including bombings that killed children with their families, and the yet-to-be-punished massacre by Staff Sgt. Robert Bales of nine children and seven adult civilians in Panjwai one year ago.

There is no shortage of new vistas for war as the U.S., with bases in 130 countries already, undertakes its military "pivot to Asia" and at the same time expands its reach in Africa. With special forces and drones already based in East, West, and Central Africa, the new war in Mali accelerated the long-planned entry of the U.S. military into a number of African countries. (See "State of the U.S. wars," March-April *N&L*.)

Iran's approach to nuclear weapons capability remains a serious flashpoint. Saber-rattling over Iran by elements of the ruling classes of the U.S. and Israel is ratcheted up and down as politics demands, yet, as with North Korea, the danger of brinkmanship remains, as underscored by Obama's trip to Israel, preceded by his adoption of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's "red line" rhetoric.

The trip itself highlighted the administration's unwillingness to take substantive action on the biggest spur to Middle East conflict: Israel's imperialist occupation of Palestine. Words about a "peace process" were drowned out by the U.S. demand for Palestinians to drop their modest demand for a freeze of settlements as a precondition of talks.

Iraq, more than a year after Obama declared the war over, remains the poster child for the ruinous effects of U.S. war and occupation. Iraq still suffers from the sectarian and ethnic violence stimulated by the U.S. invasion ten years ago, giving an example of the kind of "peace and stability" that imperialism can live with in Afghanistan and Syria. The occupiers pushed Iraq toward an ethnic/sectarian-based politics. Prime Minister Maliki has exploited those divisions and shut out Sunnis to centralize power around himself.

The country is torn by violence, with frequent attacks on religious processions, political gatherings, and independent media. On the eve of the 10th anniversary of the invasion, 56 people were killed in 19 bombings in Baghdad. Fifty people were killed in one day leading up to the April 20 elections. Al Qaeda, which had little or no presence in Iraq before 2003, regularly murders rivals now. Power outages are frequent. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation has plummeted since the invasion. In cities like Fallujah and Basra, the incidence of cancer and birth defects has spiked.

III. Climate change and development

Another devastating sign of capitalism's degeneracy is its failure even to slow down climate change, which the UN's 2013 Human Development Report warns could plunge 3.1 billion people into extreme poverty by 2050. Youth have spearheaded a new movement to control it. Blocking the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline from Canada is only their most prominent demand.

Burning all the oil in the tar sands would release 240 gigatons of carbon.⁵ That's close to half of the 565 gigatons that top climate scientist James Hansen says is the most the world can add to the atmosphere and still have an 80% chance of staying below the two-degree Celsius temperature rise that international agreements specify as a limit. Even that level is fraught with tremendous peril.

All of the proven fossil fuel reserves owned by private and public companies and governments are equivalent to 2,795 Gt of carbon. The International Energy Agency announced last year: "No more than one-third of proven reserves of fossil fuels can be consumed prior to 2050 if the world is to achieve the 2°C goal."⁶

The rate of emissions of greenhouse gases has climbed every decade, hitting a new record last year. The only thing that temporarily slowed the growth of energy use is the global economic crisis. And yet while the standard of living of working people has declined, the wealth of the 1% is still rising, as is energy use.

What should be clear is that, as Marx wrote, "Capital...allows its actual movement to be determined as

5. "How Much Will Tar Sands Oil Add to Global Warming?" by David Biello, Jan. 23, 2013, *Scientific American*.

6. See <http://www.carbontracker.org/carbonbubble/>; <http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/English.pdf>.

much and as little by the sight of the coming degradation and final depopulation of the human race, as by the probable fall of the earth into the sun." What is needed is a new way of life, a new kind of development.

The UN framework for addressing climate change, however, only reinforces the capitalist type of development. Take one example of hundreds: the Barro Blanco dam in Panama, which is accredited for the UN's so-called Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The Movimiento 10 de Abril has been resisting hydroelectric development on the Tabasará River for more than 13 years. Peasants and Indigenous Panamanians have held protests and blockades for years and have gone to the UN, despite lethal police repression. Just this March, another protester was murdered by the police, 20-year-old migrant laborer Onésimo Rodríguez.

Biofuels are sold to us as a clean, sustainable alternative to gasoline. Yet consider campesino communities in the Aguán river valley region of Honduras, who are resisting being driven off the land for the benefit of the Dinant Corporation and the Jaremar Corporation, which produce African palm oil from plantations. The corporations have employed death squads that have murdered 80 campesinos. A campaign has begun to demand cancellation of a \$30 million World Bank loan to Dinant. And yet CDM credits were approved.

A separate program called REDD ("Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation") is not in place yet, but it too is designed around carbon credits. A broad coalition called the Global Alliance of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities on Climate Change against REDD and for Life released a statement titled, "NO REDD+! in RIO+20 – A Declaration to Decolonize the Earth and the Sky." It begins:

"After more than 500 years of resistance, we, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, peasant farmers, fisherfolk and civil society are not fooled by the so-called Green Economy and REDD+ because we know colonialism when we see it. Regardless of its cynical disguises and shameful lies, colonialism always results in the rape and pillaging of Mother Earth, and the slavery, death, destruction and genocide of her peoples. Rio+20's Green Economy and REDD+ constitute a thinly-veiled, wicked, colonialist planet grab that we oppose, denounce and resist."⁷

This is not just a plot by the 1%. It is capitalism's inherent law of development. Today, the fall of the rate of profit to new lows—resulting from capitalism's law of development—has only increased capital's desperation to expropriate and commodify new spheres that it had not previously incorporated into capital. When people are driven off the land and into the urban slums, it is not only the land that is being incorporated into capital. Human beings are transformed into labor power as part of the variable capital. It is the development of the domination of dead labor over living labor.

It is these actual social relations, relations of production, forms of labor, relationship to the land and other means of production, by which we can judge what must be uprooted, and to what extent any society has or has not moved to a path of development that breaks from capitalism's never-ending growth of capital, or, as Marx put it, production for production's sake.

Social movements from below have put to the test not only the openly market-centered mechanisms of CDM, REDD, the World Bank, etc., but also the statist national governments that claim to be building socialism. The South American countries of Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador have stood up against U.S. imperialism's domination of Latin America and have reduced poverty through social programs. Yet they are pursuing development through mining and oil and gas drilling. In so doing they have come into conflict with Indigenous peoples. At the Rio+20 People's Summit, the Confederation of Indigenous Peoples of the Bolivian East went so far as to say,

"We have unmasked the double standard that [Bolivian President Evo Morales, himself an Indigenous Aymara] has in his discourse on the international level, making believe that he is a defender of Indigenous peoples, of the rights of the Indigenous peoples of Mother Earth, of the natural resources and the forest."⁸

One of their struggles is against the government's construction of a highway connecting Brazil with the Pacific Ocean, going through the TIPNIS Indigenous reserve. They say the government held sham consultations with selected people from the Indigenous communities, using deception, manipulation, and cooptation to gain the appearance of agreement.

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7. Read the whole statement at <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2012/06/19/no-redd-in-rio-20-a-declaration-to-decolonize-the-earth-and-the-sky/>.

8. <http://ww4report.com/node/11197>. For more on these struggles see <https://nacla.org/blog/2012/12/13/bolivia-end-road-tipnis-consulta>, <http://intercontinentalcry.org/venezuela-despite-overwhelming-problems-in-sierra-de-perija-the-yukpa-remain-hopeful/>, <http://intercontinentalcry.org/stand-with-the-shuar-oppose-the-mirador-mine-in-the-headwaters-of-the-river-amazon/>.



Michael Premo flickr.com/photos/michaelpremo/6060165165/ Organizing for Occupation prevented the eviction of 82-year-old Mary Lee Ward of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn.

Capitalism's violence, masses' revolt show need for total view

continued from p. 8

If humanity is going to create an alternative, non-capitalist path of sustainable human development, we cannot afford to mistake yet another form of state-capitalism for socialism. Struggles from below show that many forces of revolution are reaching for those new paths of development and are not going to be satisfied with state-capitalism. What is needed is a full commitment to develop the philosophy of revolution that encompasses revolution and liberation as real human development that begins with the masses of people taking control of their own lives and in so doing breaking the domination of capital.

IV. Arab Spring and the missing link of philosophy

A. Syria

Tunisia, Syria and Egypt show the determination of the masses to continue their revolutions in the face of vicious counter-revolution. In Syria, the doomed Assad regime has intensified its air attacks on the country's liberated areas. The death toll continues to rise, with over 70,000 estimated killed and millions left homeless. In a civilized world, not one of the victims of these attacks would have had to die, not one person would have been tortured, not one child traumatized, not one woman raped by shabiha thugs, nor one woman or man driven to the hard choice of armed self-defense.

A civilized world would have solidarized with the long months of peaceful, heroic demonstrations against the Baathist regime. That moment tested the world. The revolution in Syria is entirely a creation of its peoples' passion for freedom, but the counter-revolution is a collective creation of this alienated, inhuman world.

Shabiha murdered over 100 villagers in Haswiya, near Homs in central Syria. In Aleppo 65 were murdered, their hands bound behind them. Sixty civil-



Rebel fighters launch a boat carrying two Syrian women fleeing across the Orontes River to Turkey near the northern Syrian town of Darkush.

Freedom House flickr.com/photos/syriaifreedom/8311300394

ians, including women and children, were massacred in Sanamayn in the south. Civilians were killed in the neighborhoods of Jobar, Al-Qadam, Tadamon and Yarmouk in Damascus. Scud missile attacks wiped out whole families. The death toll is averaging over 3,000 per month. That is a higher monthly toll than during the Bosnian genocide.

This poorly provisioned, orphaned revolution fights on. The Syrian revolutionaries receive lip service and crumbs from the West, paid many times over in blood. Meanwhile the lie is propagated that a "civil war" is taking place, rather than the truth: that a revolutionary people is being targeted for genocide.

The presence of well-armed religious fundamentalists has helped to confuse the issues. Al-Qaeda opposed the Arab Spring from the start, and the revolutions marginalized its reactionary ideology more effectively than U.S. imperialism or Russian genocide could ever hope to do. The masses' humanism shamed all these powers. Now the fundamentalists are hoping to capitalize on the hypocrisy and inhumanity of the world—of which they are merely a concentrated expression—to create a new power base in Syria. They are trying to grab power away from the self-organization of the people.

Radical Islamists such as Jabhat Al-Nusra in Syria—powered in part by Iraq's decade of sectarian strife—are playing a role increasingly reminiscent of the way the Stalinists helped to destroy the Spanish Revolution from within in the 1930s, paving the way for the victory of Franco's fascism. The Stalinists in Spain systematically undermined the more radical aspects of the revolution, including the forms of organization by which workers and peasants exerted self-activity. Islamists in Syria are undermining the masses' self-activity in their zeal to impose their own counter-revolutionary vision.

As always, the counter-revolution that appears within the revolution serves to discredit the very idea of a different, better world, as it confirms the corrupt existing world's good opinion of itself. This situation, in fact, creates the starkest of dilemmas. To turn aside from facing the problem is to admit that one has ceased to be a revolutionary at all. Those who continue to fight for, as one revolutionary put it, a Syria "where every

human being—regardless of their ethnicity, their religion, or their gender—can live in freedom, without fear," must be supported. The continuing, daily demonstrations within Syria include protests against Al-Nusra by those fighting against the Assad regime.

To fight this counter-revolution from within requires not only the independent revolutionary organization of the masses but a revolutionary organizing principle, a banner of full liberation.

The need for that banner cries out in each country where the revolutions of Arab Spring are being fought out or struggling to get underway. It is therefore crucial to project concretely within all these struggles the indispensable selection of Raya Dunayevskaya's writings on the Middle East in our new publication, *Crossroads of History*, whose Foreword singles out how those writings relate to the question of revolution in permanence.

This question has become the most significant issue of the Arab Spring. Efforts to deepen and continue the revolutions include the targeting of Muslim Brotherhood offices for destruction in Egypt during mass protests. They include the national general strike carried out in Tunisia after the assassination of Marxist opposition leader Chokri Belaid, accompanied by running street battles and occupations or attacks on offices of Ennahda, the ruling Islamist party. As one protester declared, "The revolution continues! Chokri's death is a lesson for everyone!"

These actions reflect the determination of the masses not to allow a replay of the betrayal from within of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Indeed, Iran's role in supporting Assad in Syria is a direct continuation of this betrayal, disguised by reactionary religious rhetoric. However, as in Mali, the movements' ambivalent relationship to the Islamists—as well as to other elements that would like to limit the revolution, including the liberals and parts of the old state, even the Egyptian military—shows yet again the missing link of philosophy that could give the movement a direction toward revolution in permanence.

What is involved is much more than simply stopping the Islamists and others from halting the revolution. Revolution in permanence is not just a first negation but a negation of the negation, and one that encompasses all the forces of revolution as reason, and philosophy as a force of revolution. Second negation, the negation of the negation which allows the positive in the negative to emerge, is the heart of the Hegelian dialectic. It is that which Marx recreated as the philosophy of revolution in permanence. Marxist-Humanism makes a category of the dual rhythm of revolution, the destruction of the old and the creation of the new society. That is the unique understanding of revolution in permanence developed by Dunayevskaya on the basis of the new moments of Marx's last decade. To bring all of this into today's battle of ideas remains the main point not only of *Crossroads of History* but of the forthcoming collection of Dunayevskaya's writings on Karl Marx.

B. Egypt

Two years after Egypt's revolution overthrew Hosni Mubarak, fierce battles continue. Jan. 25, the second anniversary of the Day of Revolt when Cairo's Tahrir Square was first occupied, was the occasion for protests across Egypt, and renewed calls for a "second revolution." The following day, Port Said rose up after a court sentenced 21 defendants to death for a 2012 soccer riot. In addition to doubting some defendants' guilt in an event thought to have been orchestrated by the military, citizens compared the death sentences to the impunity of police, soldiers and officials responsible for lethal repression aimed at the revolutionaries of 2011 and protesters and strikers over the past two years. By Jan. 27, 40 people had been killed in clashes with police and President Mohamed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood government had lost control of the city.

The protests quickly voiced calls to bring down Morsi and the Brotherhood, and even a declaration of "the Republic of Port Said" as a repudiation of the incompleteness of the revolution. Workers, students, shop owners and even police officers joined in strikes and protest marches. Unrest spread to cities including Muhalla and Mansoura, with highway and railway blockades and campaigns to stop paying utility bills.

A nationwide wave of strikes and industrial actions broke out, advancing both political and economic demands. For 16 days in February 1,200 striking temporary workers shut down shipping—except for basic foodstuffs and tourism—at the port of Ain Sokhna, sleeping each night in empty shipping containers until they won their demand for permanent jobs. In the same town another 100-200 workers held their seventh sit-in in March, halting construction of a power plant, with a similar demand for full-time contracts.

In Alexandria 450 workers occupied the Portland Cement Factory in February to demand full-time contracts and payment of overdue bonuses, until the paramilitary Central Security Forces stormed the plant, attacking the workers with police dogs. One month later, 18 of the strikers were still being detained.

Egyptian workers have never considered the revo-

lution finished, holding more than 3,000 strikes or demonstrations over wages, working conditions and political demands since Mubarak's overthrow. More than 600 workers have been fired for union activities, with five independent union leaders sentenced to three-year prison terms for leading a strike at Alexandria Port Containers Co. But repression could not stop the class struggles from below, even though the new Islamist-written constitution treats strikes as criminal, calling them "aggression against the right to work." Morsi's replacement of over half the executive board of the state-sanctioned Egyptian Trade Union Federation with Brotherhood members only highlighted its division from the 1,000 independent unions that have sprung up in recent years.

After Morsi claimed extraordinary powers last November in the process of pushing through the new constitution, protests started targeting Muslim Brotherhood offices. On March 22, at least six offices were attacked in different cities. Protesters chanted "Revolution renewed," as well as 2011 Tahrir Square slogans such as "bread, freedom and social justice" from Muhalla to Cairo, where residents again formed neighborhood self-defense committees like those created in January 2011. They blocked dozens of buses transporting members of the Brotherhood from entering the area.

The deep contradictions within the opposition to the Brotherhood are seen in the fact that, at the very time the neighborhood committees, important forms of working-class self-organization from below, were revived, many protesters in Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said were calling for the military to oust Morsi and retake power. When activists are still fighting to ban military trials of civilians and to free those jailed by military tribunals, when the military's attempt to halt the revolution and its repression of strikes and protests are still fresh in the memory, such a call is a dramatic sign of the impasse at which the revolution has arrived.

Here the void in philosophy makes itself felt. Organizations of the Left, whether Marxists or the April 6 Youth Movement, allowed themselves to be reduced to choosing between tailending the military, the Brotherhood, or the pro-capitalist liberal opposition parties—just at the time when self-organization from below is resurfacing.

The neighborhood self-defense committees, the idealism of youth self-organizing their occupation of Tahrir Square, the workers' strikes organized in opposition to both bosses and state-recognized unions, the women defying sexism to exert self-activity in strikes and occupations and fight sexual harassment: these were and are beginnings—beginnings only, it is true, needing to be developed—toward the masses building the capacity to take power in their own hands, smash the rulers' state power, and break down capitalism, imperialism and sexism. But lack of confidence in the Idea of freedom goes hand in hand with lack of confidence in the masses' capacity to revolutionize society.

The group Revolutionary Socialists exemplified this problem when they advocated voting for Morsi as the lesser evil in last year's presidential election. Despite wishful thinking that the Brotherhood would be swayed by pressure from below to be revolutionary instead of counter-revolutionary, the fundamental reason for their opportunistic positions is their belief in the backwardness of the masses. The masses are not "ready" for socialist revolution, but "our position is always to be 'wherever the masses are.'" Even if they imagine that to be behind a reactionary movement that attacks the most advanced struggles of women, workers and youth!

In truth, while Left groups fail to make a category of just those struggles and the forms of organization arising from them, and instead blur the divide between revolution and counter-revolution, the masses of countries from Tunisia to Egypt, Syria to Yemen, are determined not to allow a repeat of the political Islamists' hijacking of the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

The concrete history of that revolution, philosophically comprehended, can shine a light on the current predicament, which is not unique to Egypt. The practicality of philosophy, as concretely worked out in confrontation with decades of revolution and counter-revolution in the Middle East, is the reason News and Letters Committees has just published *Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya.

"Iran: Unfoldment of, and Contradictions in, Revolution" (chapter 8 of the book) begins with the many new kinds of spontaneous organization taking on the form of a dual government and the mass outpouring of women that began on International Women's Day, 1979. But the Left in Iran and internationally largely advocated "critical support" for Khomeini as "anti-imperialist" and therefore downplayed or even opposed the women's fight for freedom. This once again exposed the narrowness of their vision of the future, which is at the same time a lack of theoretical preparation for revolution:

"Under these circumstances of ever new forces of
continued on p. 10

Capitalism, revolt show need for total view

continued from p. 9

revolution, for male revolutionaries to disregard how total the revolution must be if it is to uproot the exploitative, racist, sexist society, and once again try to subordinate women's struggles as a 'mere part of the whole' (as if the whole can be without its parts), is to play into the hands of the reactionaries, be that the 'secular' Bazargan government or the Ayatollah Khomeini who is trying to 'institutionalize' his Islamic 'revolution,' that is to say, confine it to where he can steal the fruit of the revolution—freedom—and leave the masses who made it at the bottom, as in any and all **class** societies....

"Unfortunately, Khomeini still remains very nearly unchallenged, that is, **seriously** unchallenged....And unfortunately the Left, too, had unfurled no new banner of freedom, and some are willing to settle for much, much less: being part of State Administration, that is, part of the new ruling bureaucracy, while shouting 'anti-imperialism.'

"...we must not permit the indigenous Iranian counter-revolution to hide under the slogan of anti-imperialism, as some in the Left are trying to do by branding not only U.S. imperialism but Kate Millett and, indeed, the whole women's revolutionary movement as if they are 'agents of imperialism.' Nothing could assure the victory of the counter-revolution more than that kind of 'anti-imperialism.'...The great weakness of the movement now, and not only in Iran, is the lack of theory, a theory stemming from a philosophy of total liberation such as is Marx's Humanism."

Soon, the dialectic of events called forth the remarkable piece "Not So Random Thoughts on: What Is Philosophy? What Is Revolution? 1789-1793; 1848-1850; 1914-1919; 1979" (chapter 10). It begins with Hegel responding to the French Revolution by elaborating the power of the Idea as "second negativity," and how Marx worked that out in theory and practice as revolution in permanence. Marx's insistence on the need for a total uprooting and for showing not only what we are against but what we are for was rooted in his recognition of "the dialectic of negativity as the moving and creating principle."

In the wake of the betrayal and collapse of the socialist Second International when World War I broke out, Lenin felt compelled to reorganize his method of thinking by returning to Marx's roots in Hegel. This turned out to be the indispensable preparation for revolution in Russia 1917, at which time his dialectical view of revolution/counter-revolution allowed him not to fall for "critical support" of the revolutionary government.

It is on this basis that Dunayevskaya analyzed the way the pseudo-revolutionary seizure of hostages at the U.S. embassy in Iran diverted attention from the completion of Khomeini's counter-revolutionary "Islamic Republic" constitution.⁹

So today it is not only a question of recognizing Egypt's new constitution as counter-revolutionary; it is not only a question of recognizing that calls for a new Constituent Assembly to replace that constitution are a diversion from the self-activity of the masses, which is the only force that can create a second revolution that could lead to "all power in the hands of the masses, their forms of organization, their control of production and the state, their smashing of the bourgeois state."¹⁰ It is a question of releasing the power of philosophy, of revolutionaries engaging in theoretical preparation for revolution and no longer allowing the separation of organization and a philosophy of liberation, and thereby working out a new relationship of theory to practice on the way to the establishment of new human relations.

Today that entails not only returning to Hegel and Marx, and comprehending the history of revolutions

9. *Crossroads of History*, p. 81.

10. *Crossroads of History*, p. 69.

from their time through the Russian to the Iranian, but returning to the philosophy of Marxist-Humanism, rooted in that history of thought and actuality and at the same time developing a new philosophical breakthrough for our era. Therefore this year we return to the philosophic moment of Marxist-Humanism, its birth in Dunayevskaya's 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes, for purposes of releasing the missing link of philosophy. (See "On the 60th anniversary of Dunayevskaya's Philosophic Letters: Hegel's Absolute Idea is for workers," p. 4.) That philosophic moment made a category of the movement from practice to theory that is itself a form of theory, which posed a new relationship of theory and practice; and in embryo it posed the dialectics of organization and philosophy. Our central organizational task this year is to project and develop these ideas in concrete intervention into the ongoing revolutions and social movements as well as into the battle of ideas. All other tasks, from expanding our revolutionary journalism to organizational growth, flow from this task and serve as tests of how we carry it out.

What can help us is to recognize this year's other important anniversaries as not accidents of the calendar but the process of the self-determination of the idea. As our Constitution states, because the Marxist-Humanist trilogy of revolution, *Marxism and Freedom, Philosophy and Revolution*, and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* "are rooted in and parallel the movement from practice to theory of our age with our own theoretical development since our birth, they are the theoretical foundations for the Marxist-Humanist organization, News and Letters Committees. However, they are not a 'program.' They are a contribution to the theoretical preparation for revolution without which no revolutionary organization or grouping can match the challenge of our era."¹¹

It adds that *American Civilization on Trial*, completed 50 years ago, concretizes that body of ideas on the American scene and for the Black dimension. *Philosophy and Revolution*, published 40 years ago this year, developed Marxist-Humanism's original contribution as Absolute Idea as New Beginning, which our Constitution relates to "the need of integrality also of philosophy and organization. As against 'the party to lead' concept, such integrality of dialectics and organization reflects the revolutionary maturity of the age and its passion for a philosophy of liberation."

Part of projecting and providing an entry into this body of ideas is completing the publication of our forthcoming book of selected writings by Raya Dunayevskaya on Karl Marx, which will help show how needed for today is his philosophy of revolution in permanence. Philosophy as missing link means not just philosophy in general but dialectical philosophy of revolution. That means Marx's new continent of thought, which Marxist-Humanism comprehends as revolving around revolution in permanence. In our age the question of "what happens after the revolution" moved from the realm of theory to that of staving off counter-revolution, making the vision of a new society a weapon in that concrete struggle. Negation of the negation as self-determination of the idea of freedom is a material force, needed to make the new society real.

Just as failure to listen to the voices from below blocks the development of theory and philosophy, the philosophic void prevents would-be revolutionaries from hearing the voices from below. Working out the needed historically grounded philosophy of liberation and working out a new, Marxist-Humanist relationship between theory and practice are not two tasks, but one and the same. The urgency of the task is underscored by the multiplicity of the crises and the simultaneity of revolution and counter-revolution. The aim remains the total uprooting of this racist, sexist, heterosexist, capitalist order and the creation of a new society on truly human foundations.

—The Resident Editorial Board, April 17, 2012

11. See the Constitution of News and Letters Committees, available through the literature listing on p. 5, and online at <http://newsandletters.org/Constitution.htm>.

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Egyptian revolutionary speaks

Cairo, Egypt—While John Kerry was in Cairo in early March, he pledged support for President Morsi in the midst of the most brutal crackdown on protesters all over the country. Scores were arrested. Police invaded Tahrir Square, destroyed all of our tents, and arrested at least 90 people.

In Port Said, a city of a million people, there has been at least two weeks of 100% successful civil disobedience. They kicked out all police and are experiencing zero crime! They established their own **people's** patrols. When the police came back, killing citizens, the military tried to put themselves between the people and the police, and the police attacked the military.

WOMEN AND THE GOAL OF REVOLUTION

What was the goal of the Egyptian Revolution? It was **freedom**, social **justice**, **equality** and **dignity**. We never achieved any of these goals, which is why we are still fighting. Equality means equality of all peoples, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or gender.

On Jan. 25, 2011, the first day of the revolution, to my amazement, a girl I've never seen before led one of the many protests. The biggest rally, which came from Giza, was led by another woman, Mahitab el Gilani.

Egypt had a flourishing movement fighting for women's rights. One of the first demonstrations for women's rights in the world was in Egypt during the revolution of 1919. The revolution started on March 9, 1919, and continued until February 1922. This non-violent revolution taught Mohandas Gandhi about non-violence. Scores were killed every day, according to the records of the British occupiers, yet people didn't stop fighting for three years. We won the return of the exiled leaders, participation in the Versailles Conference and the independence of Egypt.

Egypt has always been a beacon of whatever happens in the whole Arab world. We have been fighting against dictatorship for a long time. I personally have been in the fight for over a decade, trying and failing. We formed organizations which were infiltrated and collapsed. We've been imprisoned and tortured. Many times we were down to a few. Every group of activists in the world has to face this.

THE REVOLUTION CONTINUES

We got rid of Mubarak, one dictator, only to get an even worse one, who is trying to turn Egypt into another Iran. We are fighting this. What you know as the "Muslim Brotherhood" are just opportunists, who will do anything—lie, cheat, kill—to get power. The people are calling them just "the Brothers," and lately everyone calls them "the sheep." To us, they are only following their leaders like sheep.

We have no leaders, just goals. If you are fighting for those goals, you are our brother and sister in arms. If you are not, you are not one of us. People are fighting the same battle together, without trying to speak about their political ideology, without propagating their political views. This is the only way to make a revolution, because it is the only way to avoid factionalism. We have many revolutionary groups, all fighting together. We are not trying to form a leadership, because as soon as you designate a head, they will chop it off. The least possible hierarchy and the most horizontalism is the way to protect the revolution.

—Ahmed Salah

Privatizing City College of San Francisco

San Francisco—Despite a lull in protests against the attempted privatization of City College of San Francisco (CCSF), there remains a sense of foreboding. People in the movement are trying to find out what is going on behind the scenes, and there may be legal action in the works to compel the release of information.

One thing that has come to light is that several organizations posing as charitable groups are part of this new manifestation of the "shock doctrine," the organized effort to privatize the college and public education in general. These include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation. The appearance of NGOs, non-governmental organizations answerable to no one but themselves and their sponsors, as private surrogates for public and governmental entities, is an ominous sign of the privatization of what had previously been government functions.

On the main campus, there are subtle signs of defunding and lack of financial support. Many of the buildings are taking on a dilapidated appearance. In Cloud Hall, the men's restroom was closed for most of a year. When it reopened, we found more than half of the facilities covered in plastic, as they remain today. The women's restrooms are in a similar condition.

Students are waiting to see what happens next. The hyper-rich privatizers do not seem to be concerned with the disruption and social unrest they are causing. The rest of us are very much concerned, and will work tirelessly to ensure not only that public education will survive, but that it will grow and become more accessible.

—D. Chêneville

NEWS & LETTERS

VOL.58/NO. 3

MAY-JUNE 2013

News & Letters (ISSN 0028-8969) is published bi-monthly. Subscriptions are \$5 a year (bulk order of 5 or more, 25c each) from News & Letters, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Telephone 312-431-8242, Fax 312-431-8252. Periodical postage paid at Chicago, Illinois. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to News & Letters, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Articles may be reprinted verbatim if credited to "News & Letters."

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News & Letters is printed in a union shop.
News & Letters is indexed by Alternative Press Index.

Memphis snubs KKK

Memphis—Suppose a hate group gave a party and nobody came? That's what happened here on March 30 when several hundred people attended the first People's Conference on Race and Equality, hosted by Memphis United. Originally envisioned as a creative, nonviolent alternative to a threatened appearance by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), the Memphis United event evolved into a free multicultural, multiracial day-long celebration and public forum on creating a just and peaceful community in Memphis.

More significantly, it became apparent early in the organizing that participants hungered for more than "an event"—they wanted to connect with others to create an ongoing community for doing social justice work in Memphis.

Using the mantra of "Confronting our past, Challenging our present, Creating our future," the event featured "community conversation" panels and workshops on topics such as "Race, faith and movements," "Racial structures and racial realities in Memphis," "Environmental racism: Poverty, pollution and solutions," and "Discrimination and equality: The GLBT struggle continues." Common Ground conducted an abbreviated version of its signature facilitated conversations on race, racial identity and racism in Memphis.

The Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition and Comunidades Unidas en Una Voz provided insight into the immigration process and the necessity for fighting for the rights of immigrants and refugees. Other speakers led workshops on the importance of valuing our individual stories, nonviolent communication and an open conversation on how to build a grass-roots anti-racist movement in our city.

The dance group Danza Azteca Quetzalcoatl brought everyone to their feet with a stirring opening performance of traditional Aztec dances. They and other musical performers throughout the day reminded us that our many heritages bring us strength, and the work of social change needs vibrant engagement with the arts.

Community building was evident throughout the day and adults networked with representatives from numerous local progressive groups such as the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, the Memphis Bus Riders Union, TN Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, and many others. Children and youth contributed throughout the day to a huge Memphis United mural.

The event coincided with a non-political "Heart of Memphis" event organized by the city of Memphis and numerous other organizations that included children's activities, music and local vendors.

You can follow Memphis United at <https://www.facebook.com/MemphisUnited?fref=ts>. —Audrey May

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

Harley McGuire, a Bisexual sixth grader, killed herself because she was bullied at her Thorndale, Maine, school for her sexual orientation. Harley's middle school, Mount View, thought McGuire was merely being teased. About a year earlier, McGuire's brother, also committed suicide at the age of 20, because he was being bullied at school. Despite all this loss, McGuire's uncle, who was her legal guardian, said their family is not angry at those who bullied her because they are also children and need help.

* * *

One hundred parents of GLBT children in Guangzhou, China, sent a letter to delegates of China's National People's Congress demanding marriage equality. The members of China's affiliate of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays cited the barriers their Queer children experience in China in adoption, inheritance and buying property.

* * *

Aaron Jackson bought, then painted in rainbow colors, a house across the street from anti-Queer pastor Fred Phelps's Topeka, Kans., Westboro Baptist Church. Jackson hopes to transform his new house into a Queer rights center and to fly a rainbow flag on a 30-foot pole outside his house. Fred Phelps and his followers protest the burials of U.S. soldiers claiming the soldiers died because the U.S. is pro-Gay.

* * *

A six-year-old Transgender girl Coy Mathis was suddenly banned from using the girls' restroom at her Fountain, Colo., Eagleside Elementary school, in the middle of her first grade year. Mathis' parents were surprised by Fountain-Fort Carson District's discriminatory decision because the school was very accepting of her while she had been in kindergarten.

Kralli AHajia/MLive.com



New Yorkers protest police murders

New York—On March 9, 16-year-old Kimani Gray was shot and killed by two undercover police officers in the East Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn. Police alleged that he had a weapon, but the autopsy report showed that he had been shot in the back three times. Eyewitnesses report that he was shot even while asking the cops not to shoot him. As his mother put it, once he was down with the first shot, why were the second and the third necessary?

Both of the cops who killed Gray had civil rights complaints lodged against them. According to the *Daily News*, Sgt. Mourad Mourad had at least three suits brought against him when he was a plainclothes officer on Staten Island. Officer Jovaniel Cordova had two suits brought against him while he was stationed at Brooklyn's 70th Precinct. All of the suits alleged civil rights violations surrounding false arrest and illegal stop-and-searches.

The murder provoked a great deal of anger at the police, who are seen as an army of occupation in the neighborhood. The notorious stop-and-frisk policies of the NYPD, subject of a current civil law suit in Federal Court in New York, are common here. In the days after the murder, the neighborhood was saturated by cops in patrol cars, patrol wagons, on foot and on horseback. Police were stationed at every corner close to the location where the killing took place.

Mobile command centers with sophisticated surveillance equipment were stationed in the area, and convoys of squad cars and vans filled with police could be seen speeding along the streets. Groups of officers congregated in the side streets, and in adjoining neighborhoods metal police barricades were stacked on sidewalks. People of the neighborhood spoke of the high level of unemployment there (75% for young people) and constant police repression.

Gray's killing is just the latest example of a wave of police killings of young people over the last several years, including one last year in the same neighborhood. Religious figures in the community have tried to demonize the protesters as "outsiders" but as one person put it, in the struggle for justice there are no

End nuclear madness!

Chicago—At a Jan. 25 meeting of the Chicago Council on Science and Technology, the "smartest guys in the room," i.e., nuclear scientists and engineers, brushed off the ecological devastation and huge cost in human, animal and plant health caused by the development of nuclear weapons and nuclear power. Instead, they proudly touted themselves as inventors of a new generation of nuclear technology.

Gregory B. Jaczko, former chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, said what everyone already knew: all 104 nuclear power reactors now in operation in the U.S. have a safety problem that cannot be fixed.

What's more, we are still hearing the old saw that the reactor failure in Japan at Fukushima/Daiichi was caused by the tsunami, not by the earthquake. Yes, it was the earthquake! Alarm sirens sounded when the earthquake hit because that was when the reactors were destroyed.

Many U.S. reactors are of the same make as the one in Japan. And some of them are located on earthquake faults. So let's get real.

1. We need to decommission the nuclear reactors in the U.S.

2. We need our scientists and engineers to pay attention to the real problems: a) how are we going to help the people and animals that have been so grievously impacted by macabre results of the isotopes already here, and b) what are we going to do about nuclear waste?

Getting rid of nuclear waste is what the new technology is about. Yes, we can use the waste to produce a new generation of reactors. That way the scientists and engineers will still be heroes, keep their jobs and the U.S. will have a continuing source of material for weapons of mass destruction. Not only that, we can continue to ignore the classes of people who will suffer from illnesses, especially birth defects, that are caused by increased "background" radiation.

Give all your money to cancer research but remember, your tax dollars are always at work creating new sources of cancer-causing radiation.

—January

outsiders.

Subsequent to protests on March 24 called by anti-incarceration activists, the propaganda machine went into high gear. Gray was described as a gangbanger, a sociopath, and "no angel."

Neighborhood residents speak of the fact that there are no parks or recreation centers, forcing young people to hang out on the streets where they are harassed and assaulted by "jump-out" squads of police who do not need even the slightest excuse to put young people against the wall, frisk them and enter

their names into an NYPD computerized data bank, even if no arrest is made. This is the "militant policing" of Bloomberg and Commissioner Ray Kelly.

Last year, only a few blocks from where Gray's shooting took place, the NYPD shot and killed 23-year-old Shantel Davis. She was unarmed. In October, an NYPD detective fatally shot unarmed 22-year-old Noel Polanco, who was allegedly driving erratically near JFK airport. Police shot and killed unarmed 18-year-old Ramarley Graham in his own apartment in February last year after they pursued him in an investigation. Graham's parents were among those who attended the vigil for Kimani Gray.

For now, the neighborhood is calm. The police presence is still heavy. And people are waiting for justice for Kimani Gray.

—Michael Gilbert

Detroiters organize

Detroit—In the very real class war being waged between capitalism and Detroit residents, a small protest demonstration is the tip of the iceberg of residents' discontent. Though they have been downplayed by the conservative *Detroit News* and local "opinion leaders," the protests are surrounded by heavy security. The leaders thus reveal their fear of grassroots opposition to the loss of local control in Detroit.

The entire state of Michigan voted against the harsh emergency manager law, Public Act 436, last November only to have the lame-duck state legislature vote it right back in before year's end. On the day, March 28, that Act 436 took effect, Detroit Public Schools Emergency Manager fired the interim superintendent of schools. The mainstream media raved about businessman Dan Gilbert's plans to buy up and renovate most of downtown Detroit.

Meanwhile, neighborhoods languish under mounting piles of trash, abandoned houses, stores, factories and vehicles. City services are reduced by mandatory budget cut "furloughs." The challenge for Detroit residents is: can we stand up and organize ourselves for quality living and working conditions, some of which includes wresting support and services from our unelected new leaders? Can we articulate and realize a future Detroit developed for human needs?

Despite intermittent snow and cold winds, around 200 people rallied on March 23. Participants agreed that Emergency Financial Manager Kevyn Orr, who had negotiated Chrysler's bankruptcy in 2008, was not here to save the city but to navigate it through bankruptcy, destroying all labor contracts and "legacy" costs. This would end middle-class city government jobs and a decent retirement for former employees. Worse, it would lay the groundwork for new opportunities for capital accumulation and enrichment on the ruins of the city.

Speakers vowed to organize Detroiters to resist the continued abandonment and cheapening of residential and commercial property within city limits, and to resist the continued undermining of Detroit Public Schools by its own emergency managers and by the increasing number of charter schools in the city. (One item of good news: Cesar Chavez charter High School has just become unionized!)

Communities across the 139 square mile city continue to organize for a better future, in new or revitalized block clubs, and community associations and gardens. In parks and playgrounds that the city doesn't maintain, residents and volunteers are attempting to fill the gaps. Once the corporations revive downtown, they will look to take over the neighborhoods, forcing residents to leave. But most Detroiters want to stay and rebuild Detroit on our terms.

—Susan Van Gelder

WORLD VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

Two years on, Syria's remains an "orphan revolution," and like many orphans it is seen according to the prejudices of the observer. The extent to which reality can thus be falsified is frightening, but as the con man knows, the mark's got to want it first.

Bashar Assad's status as an ally of Russian imperialism, both as arms client and as guarantor of Russia's only Mediterranean naval base at Tarsus, has had many consequences. Some are obvious, as the diplomatic cover provided by Russia's (and China's) seat on the UN Security Council. Some are quieter, as were the rubles smuggled in to finance Assad's shabiha terrorists.

Less noticed yet has been the way Assad has inherited the ideological apparatus, the corrupt ideas and willing propagandists, first developed in support of Russian ally Slobodan Milosevic's genocide in Bosnia. This apparatus was honed during Russia's devastation of Chechnya, then Serbia's invasion of Kosova. It finally found a massive Western echo chamber after Sept. 11, 2001. The Syrian Revolution has been met with attacks by this apparatus from the beginning.

ONCE AGAIN, RAPE...

It is instructive to compare the 1990s, when pretty much only the women's movement gave vocal support to Bosnia, with Syria today. Some of the same crimes are happening now.

The Women's Media Center's Women Under Siege project, together with Syrian activists, has been collecting data on the occurrence of rape as a weapon. This followed reports from refugees that led to comparisons with Bosnia. Jody Williams, co-chair of the Interna-



Chicago—The second anniversary of the Syrian Revolution is marked.

tional Campaign to Stop Rape & Gender Violence in Conflict, has said, "With every war and major conflict, as an international community we say 'never again' to mass rape. Yet, in Syria, as countless women are again finding the war waged on their bodies—we are again standing by and wringing our hands."

Perhaps it is actually more like Congo's ongoing wars, where such scant attention is paid that little hand-wringing takes place. But the statistics that Women

Under Siege has gathered show a definite use of rape (of both women and men) by Assad's army and militias. Sixty percent of attacks are carried out by government troops, and 20% by the shabiha. Another 6% involve both these forces working together. For the rest: 15% of attacks are by unknown or "other" perpetrators, and less than 1% attributed to the Free Syrian Army.

LIE CALLED 'NORMAL'

Along with the horror of mass rape as a weapon comes the big

lie that Assad is defending "secularism," presumably with the aid of both Iran's theocrats and Lebanon's Hezbollah, and is even defending women's freedom. It is equal to the lie that he is somehow defending the country's minority religious sects, despite his murder, torture and imprisonment of anyone who opposes him, whether Sunni, Alawite, Christian, Palestinian or Kurd. It would be hard to convince the bombed-out Palestinian refugees of Yarmouk, or the Kurdish villagers bombed in April, that he is their savior.

But again, there is a large body of propagandists who do assert this lie. They range from the many internet commenters, usually anonymous, who fill up news and web sites with pro-Assad comments (some that are known to me were also supporters of Milosevic) to a journalist like Patrick Cockburn who travels to Damascus and sees only what his prejudices incline him to see—mainly Assad in firm control with solid popular support.

Before the Arab Spring, Assad tried to project the image of a more "modern" ruler, and the world sent him architects, fashion designers, opera singers and musicians to create a Syria in its own image, without the torture chambers, or the massacres in Lebanon.

The celebrities are long gone. What remains is the desire not to see.

There are certain moments when the struggle for the soul of a revolution coincides with that revolution's struggle for the future of humanity. I believe this is a basic understanding of Marxism. Maybe the world has such a hard time looking at Syria today because it fears to see itself there a little too clearly.

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) and his legacy

Nigeria's Chinua Achebe, who passed away March 21, was probably the greatest African writer from the era of its anti-colonial revolutions. His novels, from *Things Fall Apart* (1958) to *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), portray the elations and dilemmas of that era. The world has barely begun to grasp the importance of Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Camara Laye, and the

Venezuela election

The narrow victory of Vice President Nicolas Maduro over Henrique Capriles was a surprise. Hugo Chavez' endorsement had been expected to carry more weight. Both the Chavistas and the opposition made much of the demonstrations and street fighting that followed.

More significant for the long run was the vote itself. The close Venezuelan elections of recent years have likely represented the tensions inherent in Chavismo itself. While Hugo Chavez did do things to benefit many of the poorest Venezuelans, he also maintained a relationship with the business community.

There are limits to how far such a balancing act can be pushed, especially in the present moment of economic crisis. Doubtless, some among Chavez' bourgeois constituents will be attracted to the policies of Capriles, a more intelligent representative of the bourgeois opposition than the coup plotters of old.

Chavez' Bolivarian Revolution has largely been able to walk this tightrope, but the laws of capitalism still hold. At some point serious revolutionaries must come into conflict with them, and that moment of decision is fast approaching in Venezuela.

The support Maduro got from the other Latin American governments, post-election, shows the extent politics in the region have changed. Direct imperialist domination has weakened but capital has not been profoundly challenged.

Boston bombing

The two bombs that exploded near the finish line of the Boston Marathon on Patriots' Day, April 15, have killed three people, about 180 more wounded, many shrapnel wounds leading to amputation. The bombs wreaked more damage than the previous notorious bomb set off in public space at a sports venue, at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics by Eric Rudolph, the serial bomber of abortion clinics and gay bars.

The Boston Marathon bombing follows mass killings in the past year in an Aurora, Colo., theater, at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin and at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. The body count might have risen sharply if the bombs had been of dynamite like what killed four little girls in 1963 at a Birmingham church, or of the fertilizer type that killed 168 people and destroyed the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in 1995, instead of relatively low-tech gunpowder bombs made by amateur bombers.

As we go to press, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev is in custody after a historic lockdown of the Boston area, one day after his brother Tamerlan Tsarnaev was killed in a police shootout. Even before he was captured, there were calls to treat him as an enemy combatant, to send him to Guantanamo, to subject him to a military tribunal. Those calls continue, but authorities have delayed giving him his Miranda rights.

In the Patriot Act era, it was no surprise that even before there were suspects, politicians and talking heads were screaming for rooting out the international conspiracy. Like the harassment of anyone taken for an Arab in the days after the Oklahoma City bombing before Timothy McVeigh was arrested, CNN ran with the "scoop" that a "dark-skinned male" had been identified with surveillance cameras and had been arrested, but they could not identify the suspect's accent.

The national chauvinists did not get the dark-skinned suspects they craved: the Tsarnaev brothers are U.S.-educated athletes and actual Caucasians—having lived in Dagestan and other areas of the Caucasus Mountains. Yet as Muslims they are treated as honorary brown-skinned people. Because they were ethnic Chechens, media demonization of Chechnya now sounds like what Russian President Vladimir Putin might say after another Russian massacre. Back in 1968 Sirhan Sirhan was one of the most hated men in the U.S. after he killed Presidential candidate Robert F Kennedy, avowedly over Middle East policy, yet the assassination was considered his own act, not the act of Palestinians. No longer.

Everyone is an instant expert on the Tsarnaevs' life. Bush's Homeland Security boss Michael Chertoff urged special extra-constitutional surveillance for everyone like them (presumably youth from areas he does not like). But they seem to be true Americans—in the style of McVeigh. Studious over-achievers turning to mass killings is as American as apple pie. Gaining motivation from political Christianity or political Islam can result in even more depraved indifference.

—Bob McGuire

other writers of Africa's freedom struggle.

Achebe could have coasted on his literary prestige, but he remained a dissident. He didn't hesitate to criticize classic Western authors for racist attitudes, most famously Joseph Conrad. Perhaps as a result, Achebe was denied the Nobel Prize that he easily merited. He also criticized, in and out of his novels, the many corruptions and failings of Africa's unfinished revolutions, especially in Nigeria. Nowhere did these contradictions appear more starkly than in the Biafran War.

Achebe wrote in a recent essay, "The Genocidal Biafran War Still Haunts Nigeria": "Almost 30 years before Rwanda, before Darfur, more than 2 million people—mothers, children, babies, civilians—lost their lives as a result of the blatantly callous and unnecessary policies enacted by the leaders of the federal government of Nigeria. As a writer I believe that it is fundamentally important, indeed essential to our humanity, to ask the hard questions, in order to better understand ourselves and our neighbors...there is precious little relevant literature that helps answer these questions. Did the federal government of Nigeria engage in the genocide of its Igbo citizens—who set up the Republic of Biafra in 1967—through punitive policies, the most notorious being 'starvation as a legitimate weapon of war'?...Why has the war not been discussed, or taught to the young, more than 40 years after its end? Are we perpetually doomed to repeat the errors of the past because we are too stubborn to learn from them?"

His last book, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, is an effort to engage those issues. At the end of his life, Achebe made a great statement of responsibility toward the future. His questions are only more significant because they resonate beyond the Africa of newly-won independence to a world struggling with the meaning of history and revolution. He remained true to the fundamental question of his revolutionary age: what does it mean to be human?

Tunisia and the Left

The Feb. 26 assassination of Tunisian Marxist Chokri Belaid is a tragedy, not least because it denies this serious and courageous activist a chance to help work out the contradictions in his own movement. His funeral—perhaps a million people took to the streets—became a massive demonstration in favor of continuing the Tunisian Revolution.

The popular theory that the "moderate" Ennahda Party has used the Salafists to its far right as threats to the Left is credible. The historic demonstrations in memory of Belaid may help defeat reactionary Islamism in Tunisia.

Belaid, a 1980s student activist and lawyer, led the Unified Party of Democratic Patriots, a small organization in the Popular Front. But his call for social justice and critique of reactionary religion spoke to millions.

BELAID'S LEFT AND THE WORLD LEFT

At the World Social Forum in Tunisia in March, some tried to use that critique of religion for their own purposes, for example, trying to justify support for Assad in Syria, claiming the revolution there was motivated solely by religion. A group styling itself "Shabiha Forever" actually beat up a group of supporters of the Syrian Revolution and vandalized their display booth.

Others attempted to counterpose the Syrian and Palestinian struggles—falsely, since most Palestinians support the Syrians, and vice versa. When some Leftists shouted, "Jihad is in Palestine, you religious clerks!" the sentiment was as misplaced as it was senseless.

NEGATION AND HUMAN EMANCIPATION

Marx's critique of religion never stopped at this kind of first negation. His critique was based on revolution. It led him to recognize the greater personal freedom of North Africa's Muslims, the greater intelligence of Australian animists, and "the heart of a heartless world."

Marx began his search for revolution in permanence with second negativity:

"We do not assert that [the masses] must overcome their religious narrowness in order to get rid of their secular restrictions, we assert that they will overcome their religious narrowness once they get rid of their secular restrictions...The question of the *relation of political emancipation to religion* becomes for us the question of the *relation of political emancipation to human emancipation*" ("On the Jewish Question," 1843).

In his 1844 Manuscripts, Marx equally criticizes religious alienation and abstract atheism that fails to grasp history. Out of respect to Belaid's memory, the Left in Tunisia and elsewhere might want to grasp that principle of second negativity. It will bring them much closer to the thought and activity of the Tunisian and Syrian masses.

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

“Human power is its own end”—Karl Marx

Vol. 58 No. 4

JULY-AUGUST 2013

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WORKSHOPTALKS

The boss is spying

by Htun Lin

The media has been awash with articles on U.S. government surveillance since the bombshell revelations by National Security Agency analyst Edward J. Snowden of Big Brother data mining of citizens’ phones and internet use. The legal framework for wholesale surveillance, created by the Patriot Act, was fully sanctioned by the U.S. Congress and a special post-9/11 “Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act” Court.

The data mining by large U.S. corporations gets less attention. It goes beyond the tracking of every mouse-click, purchase and “like” registered by every consumer on the internet, and relies not only on sophisticated electronic devices, but on the currency of fear and sheer intimidation which would make a Big Brother tyrant proud, the kind depicted in George Orwell’s dystopian novel 1984.

SHAPE UP OR PAY UP

The April 6 *Wall Street Journal* reported in “Shape Up or Pay Up: Firms Put in New Health Penalties” that six in ten major Fortune 500 companies, like Michelin, plan to mandate compliance by individual workers. Or else: “Are you a man with a waistline measuring 40 inches or more? If you want to work at Michelin North America Inc., that spare tire could cost you.” The article continues: “Employees at the tire maker who have high blood pressure or certain size waistlines may have to pay as much as \$1,000 more for healthcare coverage starting next year.”

Where I work at a major HMO, there is a campaign
continued on p. 3

EDITORIAL Support striking prisoners!

Since February, prisoners at Guantanamo Bay have carried on a massive hunger strike to protest indefinite detention in abusive conditions with no end in sight. They are calling the world’s attention to the fact that those cleared for release, 86 in all, have been languishing for more than a decade without any charges. As the hunger strike gained publicity, President Obama suddenly recalled his long-abandoned promise to close Guantanamo and began a new round of lip service, yet the torture of people there continues.

As of June 14, 104 of the 166 captives at Guantanamo are on a hunger strike, 43 of whom are tortured twice daily with brutal force-feedings. Medical ethicists George Annas and Sondra Crosby wrote, “Force-feeding a competent person is not the practice of medicine; it is aggravated assault.”¹ They call on the specially flown-in doctors to refuse to participate, in effect to mutiny. More than 150 medical professionals published an open letter in *The Lancet* asking President Obama to allow them to treat the prisoners.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN PRISONS

Guantanamo, a creature of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, is the latest reminder of how little human rights mean to the U.S. government. Veterans Elliott Adams and Tarak Kauff, prisoners Norman Lowry and “Indiana Inmate 1776,” and seven other U.S. citizens are on hunger strikes or fasts in solidarity. They are right to draw a connection between Guantanamo Bay and prisons generally.

1. “Guantanamo Bay: A Medical Ethics-free Zone?” *The New England Journal of Medicine*, June 12, 2013, <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1306065>

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Turkey, Syria and Iran at crossroads of world revolt

by Gerry Emmett

“There is nothing real about them but their common conspiracy against life, their egotism of class interest, their wish to feed upon the carcass of French society, their common slaveholders’ interests, their hatred of the present, and their war upon Paris.”

—Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*

The mass protests in Turkey, the presidential election in Iran and, above all, the continuing struggle for the Syrian revolution express the depth of today’s social crisis. These crises are interpenetrated and inseparable. The stakes are high.

The reactionary forces that were set back on their heels by the Arab Spring revolts two years ago have found a new lease on life. Above all, this has been the result of dictator Bashar al-Assad’s genocidal attacks upon the Syrian masses. Around this criminal assault has re-gathered the threat of regional war that had been pushed back by mass revolts.

What these regional powers—Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia—and their allies the U.S., Russia and China, hate and fear is revolution: people fighting for freedom and new human relations.

These powers have already shown themselves willing to sacrifice, by official estimates, over 90,000 Syrian lives (likely over 100,000); they have been willing to create millions of refugees; and they have been all too willing to accept the utmost degradation of world politics and culture.

At the same time, from Turkey to Brazil, mass protest and revolt continue to erupt. Would-be analysts of the Arab Spring who treated the experience of new human relations at Tahrir Square, for example, as if it were mere drunkenness that would pass without leaving a trace, were wrong. The masses in motion face the world with sober senses, while the rulers have nothing to offer but an orgy of slaughter.

TURKEY: MASSES vs. ERDOGAN, AKP

In Turkey, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been in power for 11 years. Viewed by foreign investors, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as a savior of Turkish capitalism, Erdogan has been increasingly authoritarian. It is one of the worst countries in the world to be a journalist—dozens, including investiga-

tive reporters and minority Kurds, are being held in prison under vague charges. The anti-press campaign has resulted in a wide-ranging self-censorship of all media.

Erdogan’s growing arrogance has created new social tensions as well. On May 28, these burst into mass protests over the defense of Taksim Gezi Park, one of the last green spaces in urban Istanbul.

Demands included an end to the sale of public spaces, the right to free expression without fear of arrest or torture, and the right to a free and open media. The key demand was *freedom*. It was widely felt that the “moderate Islamism” of the AKP was being imposed upon a traditionally secular population. Women’s rights are threatened, and women’s

voices have been prominent. As one woman said, “I am okay with extending democracy to women who want to wear the headscarf. That is acceptable. But it seems Erdogan wants to force *all* women to wear it. That is unacceptable.”

Another protester said, “The whole country is being sold to corporations for the construction of malls, luxury condominiums, freeways, dams and nuclear plants. The State under its conservative agenda passed laws and regulations concerning abortion, Caesarean birth, sale and use of alcohol, and even the color of lipstick worn by airline stewardesses. People are marching for their right to live freely with justice and respect. They demand to be involved in decision-making about the city they live in.”

OCCUPY GEZI REWRITES CITY

Another participant described the Occupation of Taksim Square and Gezi Park: “To the left of the stairs that lead to the park, Kurds dance the Halay in an ever widening circle. The Kurdish flag flies and the radio blasts guerrilla songs. A crowd moves past—‘Turkey for the Turks!’ Kemalists most likely with their red star and crescent banners. They chant, ‘We are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal!’ Down the path they will come across a group of Gay men marching in the other direction and chanting, ‘We are nobody’s soldiers!’ Between the two you find a tent for the Turkish Socialist Party—old school hardliners—and another tent of middle-aged Armenian church ladies distributing cookies.

continued on p. 10

Revolutionary from Turkey speaks

Events in Turkey appeared spontaneous, but are a continuation of a long history. It was not the psychology of Prime Minister Erdogan that created opposition, but the institutionalized fascism within a “deep state.”

Turkey is capitalist, but not like Europe, the U.S., or Canada. It did not have a series of bourgeois revolutions. Capitalism in Turkey was installed top-down by colonialist rule. Independence gained by the anti-colonial movement did not achieve concrete freedoms, it created neo-colonialism: native capitalists dependent on imperialism in metropolitan capitalist countries through finances, production systems, etc. Accumulation in Turkey is not just for the native capitalists, it has to be shared with the metro-capitalists.

During capitalist crises the military intervenes to clamp down any unrest. When the crisis abates, the military may step down, but it is not bourgeois democracy that takes power, it is institutionalized civil repression. The U.S. is moving in this direction also. This is the way it is becoming a Third World country.

In the 1980s the U.S. decided they would prefer a

moderate Islam to rule in Middle East countries. Previous rule was established by race/ethnicity. It did not allow huge sections of the population to be accepted, creating opposition. Erdogan came to power as part of the change into “moderate Islam.”

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE, KURDS’ OPPRESSION

Since the 1920s Turkey has not been secular. In the Ottoman Empire, the nascent capitalist class was Armenian. When the Ottoman Empire crumbled, Armenians became the scapegoats. Modern Turkey was founded on that genocide. Then the Greeks were kicked out. At the time the Kurds, as fellow Muslims, were Turkey’s allies. Then Kurds, too, became “externalized”: their language was banned, their communities abused by authorities. The unsolvable problem in Turkey now is the Kurds.

It was a Kurdish parliamentarian who put his body in front of the bulldozers that came to uproot the trees in the only—tiny—park left in Istanbul, to turn it into a shopping mall. He started talking about concrete freedom.

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Protesters occupying Gezi Park in Istanbul, Turkey, on June 8, 2013.

WOMAN AS REASON

by Terry Moon

It was both shameful and astonishing when Senator Carl Levin, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, cut Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand’s measure giving military prosecutors rather than commanders the power to decide which sexual assault crimes to try. Gillibrand’s measure was the first—ever—to offer a realistic solution to military rape and abuse.

Despite over 20 years of pontificating that the military has “zero tolerance” for sexual assault, it has continued to escalate and ruined thousands of lives. It has led to homelessness, post-traumatic stress and murder: 19-year-old LaVena Johnson in July 2005 and 20-year-old Maria Lauterbach in 2007—both murdered by fellow soldiers—and those are the ones we know of.

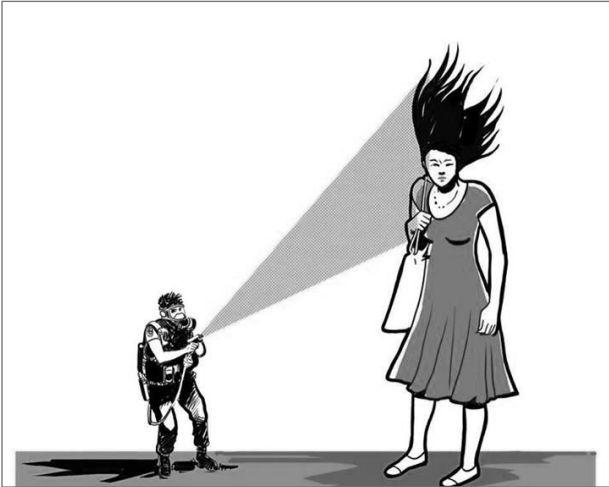
In just the few weeks succeeding Levin’s actions, a West Point sergeant was found videotaping dozens of women cadets without their knowledge; an officer in charge of Air Force sexual assault prevention programs was arrested for sexual battery; at Annapolis Naval Academy three football players are under investigation for raping a woman midshipman; and an Air Force commander threw out an aggravated sexual assault conviction of an Air Force fighter pilot because he “wanted to show the pilot community [which in his mind were all men] that he had their backs.”

The Senate hearing at the beginning of June had not one woman sexual assault victim testifying. Those invited consisted of two supporters of taking the decision to prosecute out of the chain of command and 18 opponents.

Why has nothing changed? Why is Levin capitulating to those who insist on keeping the prosecution of rape within the chain of command when that is, in

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis



Women are at least half of those protesting in Taksim Square in Istanbul, Turkey, against the fundamentalist Islamic policies of Prime Minister Erdogan. The government had considered banning abortion in 2012 after years of campaigning to force every woman to give birth to at least three children. It has not supported working mothers but introduced financial incentives for them to stay home, and has renamed the Ministry for Women the Ministry for Family and Social Policy. Women have been leading demonstrations, chanting loudly, and drinking beer in public, while an image of a woman in a red dress tear-gassed by riot police has become a social media icon.

Asociacion de Mujeres Meretrices de Argentina, Argentina’s union for women sex workers, has started a campaign of images wheat-pasted on buildings. One side shows a woman in a suggestive pose, while the other shows her leading her children home from school or pushing a baby carriage. A caption states, “86% of sex workers are mothers. We need a law to regulate our work.” Prostitution is legal in Argentina, but brothels are not, and AMMAR states sex workers need protections against violence and exploitation. The campaign’s emphasis on motherhood has been somewhat controversial among international feminists because that is only one reason that *all* workers need rights.

Maria Alekhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova, two members of feminist activist punk band “Pussy Riot,” are serving two-year sentences for “hooliganism motivated by religious hatred” for their protest against Russian president Putin’s policies merging church and state. On June 1, Alekhina ended her 11-day hunger strike after officials at her prison colony in the Ural mountains ended a security crackdown she says was intended to turn other prisoners against her. She had spent five months in solitary confinement after stating that officials deliberately housed her with hardened criminals to intimidate her. Tolokonnikova’s husband, Pyotr Verzilov, said, “It seems the public reaction was so big that there was a political decision,” because “it’s not in the tradition of the prison system here to make any concessions.”

Stop military abuse

fact, the problem? One can only guess that the military brass fear that other crimes might also be opened up to military prosecutors, or even to civilian or international courts.

MILITARY CONTROL FREAKS

The military wants to control what happens to those who kill civilians, disobey orders, rape and abuse other soldiers, or go absent without leave. They don’t want their practices opened up to a civilian world. We see this in how the U.S. has strongly opposed any kind of international court having jurisdiction over U.S. soldiers, which is why they never ratified the treaty for the International Criminal Court; and U.S. forces left Iraq because Iraq refused to grant them immunity from Iraqi courts. No, for the military, *nothing* can escape the chain of command.

That women have proved themselves equal in war situations is now so much a fact that the military announced it will “eliminate all unnecessary gender-based barriers” by 2016. This means that women can now work their way up this vaunted chain of command that has been closed to them because they were blocked from the required ground combat experience.

Feminist organizations are applauding, but should they? Such a move will put more women in harm’s way—not only of being killed in a war, but of being assaulted or murdered by their so-called “fellow” soldiers. But even more, just what good has “our” military done in the last two wars?

WAR HASN’T HELPED WOMEN

A March 2013 report by scholars with the “Costs of War” project at Brown University’s Watson Institute for International Studies estimated that “More than 70% of those who died of direct war violence in Iraq have been civilians—an estimated 134,000. This number does not account for indirect deaths due to increased vulnerability to disease or injury as a result of war-degraded conditions. That number is estimated to be several times higher.” The higher number taking account of those conditions was revealed when *The Lancet* published a study showing “that as of July, 2006, there have been 654,965 (392,979-942,636) excess Iraqi deaths as a consequence of the war.” As is true in almost every war, for every soldier killed, ten civilians die. What exactly has the Iraq war accomplished? It certainly hasn’t helped women.

WOMEN SHOULDN’T HELP WAR

Afghanistan has known nothing but war for decades, and while women were one of the justifications the U.S. used to invade, it is doubtful that the U.S. war will have any lasting effect in improving women’s lives, particularly now that the U.S. is so thrilled to be having talks with the Taliban. It has been clear for some time that for the U.S., Afghan women’s freedom is expendable. When the U.S. leaves, Afghan women’s rights activists fear that the little progress they have made will be destroyed.

Given this reality of war, of rape and brutal abuse of women in the military, why should feminists be happy that women, by 2016, will have reached “equality” with men? Like Women’s Liberationists in the 1960s, we shouldn’t be calling for more women soldiers, we should be demanding an end to war altogether as well as to the military.

Left Forum panel: ‘Low-wage workers forward’

Below we print excerpts from a Left Forum panel, Foundations of Economic Justice: Low-wage workers forward!, where S. and J., young workers at Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) in New York City, spoke. A. works with New York Communities for Change (NYCC) (www.nyccommunities.org).

New York—S. People take advantage of their power. We are always working “off the clock,” but if the store isn’t making enough money, they don’t pay us for that. If you work 60 hours one week, they credit your work to the next week so they won’t have to pay you overtime. It’s always straight time, never overtime. If you speak out against anything, they reduce your hours.

We do things the right way when KFC corporate visits the store. But if you speak out when a manager has you do things the wrong way, your hours will be cut.

If you have three write-ups, you are out of your job. As a crew leader, if the store fails an inspection, I am written up. We are blamed for things that are out of our control, such as broken ventilation equipment.

I have been earning \$7.75 per hour. I’m supposed to make \$8.50, but my manager said, “Give me some time.” Well, you’ve had a year now!

NYCC said, “You are supposed to make more than \$7.75.” I said “What?” The goals of the organizing campaign are to see what is not right and to see change, change some minds. I have three children. My husband knows every job that I do because so often I am the only person in the store after it closes at 11:00 PM. He comes in and helps me close the store, until 2:00 or 3:00 AM. It breaks my heart that so much is wrong.

J. We are not properly compensated for the hard-working people we are. I was a crew leader; basically I

Anti-abortion fanatics

In El Salvador, 22-year-old Beatriz had such serious health problems that if she carried her fetus to term she would need a kidney transplant or die. Her fetus had anencephaly: part of its brain and/or skull was missing and it could not survive. But on May 29, fanatics in El Salvador’s highest court refused her an abortion. They tortured her for six and a half weeks as her health worsened and she begged doctors not to let her die. When her health had deteriorated severely, the Health Minister, instead of opting for a less-invasive abortion, allowed Beatriz to have a Caesarean section—major surgery that could have killed her, and will take months to recover from. Of course the fetus died.

That is fanaticism.

We saw it before in Ireland when a Hindu woman from India, Savita Halappanavar, died last year in an Irish hospital while 17 weeks pregnant. She was having contractions prior to a natural miscarriage and despite septicemia, her worsening condition and a non-viable fetus, doctors refused to terminate her pregnancy until the fetus died—and there was no doubt that it would die. Halappanavar was tortured as she suffered what a lead investigator in a report of her death described as “a cascade of mistakes” overshadowed by zealot officials’ refusal to remove the fetus until its heart stopped, which took four days. By then she was suffering sepsis from a ruptured uterus that killed her.

And these fanatics use the language “pro-life.”

Ideologues in the same mold are in the U.S. state houses and Congress. They wallow in fanaticism as they ignore science; mandate that doctors lie to women or withhold facts of their health from them; order women to undergo unnecessary, painful medical procedures like vaginal ultrasounds; force women to view unnecessary sonograms that they don’t want; make women drive hundreds of miles for legal medical procedures; mandate that clinics be built like hospitals when women are 14 times more likely to die during or after giving birth to a baby than from an abortion.

Now Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives have pushed through a bill banning abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy—when 24 weeks is what the U.S. Supreme Court ruled legal. Fanaticism ruled as the original bill, put forth by six all-male members of a sub-committee, had only a narrow exception to save a woman’s life, no exceptions for rape or incest or to protect a woman whose health is endangered or for cases of severe fetal anomalies. Only a last-minute revision allows a limited exception for rape or incest, but the crime would have had to be reported.

All the signs of fanaticism were evident: the bill’s author, Trent Franks, ignores science, claiming, “the incidences of rape resulting in pregnancy are very low.” The excuse to ban abortions after 20 weeks is another denial of scientific fact: the claim that a 20-week fetus feels pain. Republican Michael Burgess bases his belief of fetal pain in sonograms where fetuses move their hands, “stroke their face” and “may have their hand between their legs,” as if that proves “they feel pleasure.”

The fact is that each year in the U.S., 700 women die of pregnancy-related complications, 52,000 experience emergencies and an additional 34,000 barely avoid death. Everything these zealots are doing will push those rates higher.

—Abortion rights activist

was running the business. I requested a demotion, so I no longer have the title or the responsibility but still do much the same work. In response, they cut my hours.

We are asking for a livable wage of \$15.00 per hour and the right to unionize. It’s a bad economy; there is no flow: how is an economy going to work if rich people hog all the money? That’s why we are in this campaign. The rich see us as poor people, only to serve them.

I’d like to see us bring all these organizing efforts together in a nationwide effort, because people forget a struggle here, a win there. We need to make people aware. Our goal is fairness, dignity. The cost of living keeps rising: \$5.00 today buys you a plate of junk food. I want to see economic justice for the working poor.

A. NYCC arose from the ashes of ACORN. Our organizing is community-based, and we find that the political will to support workers is there. We helped the carwashers sign two contracts (see *N&L* May-June). We support their efforts to prevent the owners from dumping chemicals into local waterways and for workers to protect themselves against harmful chemicals.

We fight against wage theft and exploitation. We let the store owners know: “We are watching you.” One million dollars has been returned to workers, and some stores pressured by Free Flatbush have actually paid their workers the minimum wage.

It makes a huge difference to fast food workers who walk out in protest to have 20 community people in support. We have a tactic of “walking the workers back to work,” which means a lot to the other workers and gets the protesting workers’ jobs back.

—Susan Van Gelder

Wendy’s escucha, el pueblo está en la lucha

‘Listen, Wendy’s — the people are fighting’

New York —Several hundred farmworkers and their supporters rallied in the streets of Manhattan on May 18, demanding that Wendy’s do what McDonald’s, Taco Bell, Burger King, Subway and Whole Foods have already done: sign a Fair Food agreement to better the working conditions of thousands of agricultural workers in the tomato fields of Florida.

The rally featured a silent skit showing how people united had forced food chains to sign the agreement, and how farmworkers came together and realized their power through unity and struggle. As the skit ended, everybody began chanting at a Wendy’s effigy, “SIGN, SIGN, SIGN!”

There were speeches in Spanish and English, with the farmworkers extending thanks to all who had turned out. It was mostly a youthful crowd, and the energy level as we began to march was high. First we had a spirited picket line outside a Wendy’s, then we marched to a soon-to-open Wendy’s.

Farmworkers I talked to spoke of the battles they had fought in Florida to get the Fair Food agreement. One man told me that the agreement had made life in the fields better, but that in fields not covered by the



Striking fast food workers rally in Milwaukee

agreement, growers are still using pesticides. And he spoke with pride of the new center that the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) had built for the community—a place where citizens can meet, and where the farmworkers go for serious meetings and social functions.

I also spoke with Latino workers from New York who had come out to support their brothers and sisters from the Deep South.

One farmworker said Wendy’s is the last national fast food chain that refuses to sign the Fair Food Program. For several decades now, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers has been fighting for justice in the fields where America’s tomato crops are grown. One by one, the major fast food chains have agreed to buy only tomatoes that were harvested under fair working conditions. The CIW has been organizing to improve working conditions and wages for people who pick the tomatoes we eat. They fight to eradicate human rights abuses, like wage theft, sexual assault and modern slavery, which once ran rampant.

Most of the largest fast food chains agreed to pay an extra penny per pound of tomatoes to raise wages and to buy only from fields where workers’ rights are respected. Wendy’s is lagging behind in refusing to sign, despite being asked five times since 2007.

Latino participants at the rally and march enthusiastically received copies of *News & Letters* with the Spanish language insert. The New York branch is looking forward to even more involvement in labor and social struggles. Whether it is Trade Fair or Wendy’s, we will be present, presenting our unique revolutionary perspective, that of Marxist-Humanism.

—M.G.

New battle after Trade Fair lockout ends

New York —“Trade Fair update: All locked out workers have now been returned to their jobs, but at part-time hours, reduced wages, etc. The fight goes on!”

With the above post on the UFCW Local 342 web page, the union officially informed its members and supporters that the boycott of the Trade Fair supermarket chain based in Queens, N.Y. had come to an end.

The supermarket did agree to retain all the locked-out workers. However, deep concessions were made. The workers had their hours reduced to 24 hours a week, their jobs reclassified, and were given new rotations on the job. In addition, the scab workers hired during the lockout still have their jobs. Nonetheless, the union feels that by forcing the Trade Fair management to rehire all the locked-out union members, they did win a victory.

In addition, the union is pursuing its unfair labor practices claim against Trade Fair before the NLRB, and is guaranteeing that workers now working less than full-time will continue to receive full benefits.

However, all is not well at Trade Fair. Customers are complaining about the decline in services as understaffing has had a negative impact at the meat department at the stores where the lockout occurred. But the fighting spirit of Local 342 is far from dead. Union workers on the job still wear their union buttons, and will not rest until there is a complete restoration of workers’ rights.

—Michael Gilbert

Reclaiming May Day

New York —May Day, the day we claim our heritage in revolution. May 1, 2013: a day to herald the triumph of labor over capitalist sloth, over the enforced idleness of unemployment, over the inanities of the leisure class. It’s a sunny spring day in Union Square. This is hallowed ground. How many revolutionaries have addressed the working class here, standing on improvised platforms, proclaiming the new day, proclaiming Socialism?

Then a hollow note, ill-sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal slightly out of tune; where is the solidarity of yesteryear? Like the Tower of Babel of old, there is a jarring of voices, each hawking its own brand of snake oil, an alphabet soup of shibboleth initials: SWP, RCP, WWP, ISO, and so on; but where is unity of purpose?

A small group warps our landscape. A muscular thug holds up a placard. It reads: “48% of all billionaires are Jewish.”

We are galvanized. A current runs through us: white, black, brown, beige, old, young, men, women. “Racist out, racist out” is our anthem, rhythmized out in contrapuntal repetition, at the top of our voices, as we expel the rude intruders. We are one, a choir in unison.

—Paul Geist

L.A. garment workers solidarity with Dhaka

Los Angeles —In reaction to the April garment factory collapse in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which killed 1,127 people (see article, p. 12), a recent panel discussion at the UCLA Center brought together garment workers, students, and activists. The aim was to connect U.S. garment workers with garment workers in Bangladesh and to prohibit international merchants such as Gap and Wal-Mart from contracting with garment factories overseas who do not have worker fire safety standards.

A Los Angeles garment worker on the panel said, “Garment worker conditions in Los Angeles are no different than in Bangladesh” where emergency doors are blocked, fire extinguishers are locked, there is no first aid kit, and workers use sewing machine oil to cleanse wounds caused by sharp scissors and needles.

The garment worker said they are paid a few pennies for each piece they are assigned. If they do more pieces than what the boss was expecting, he reduces their pay the next week.

Deogracia Cornelio, from the Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program at UCLA, said factory owners create exploitative conditions and fan the culture of “work, work, work.” The program showed a video of a woman worker organizer whose assistant’s dead and tortured body was recently found in a Bangladesh suburb. Despite the violence, the response of this woman organizer showed that workers will not stop fighting for their rights.

Powerful words of poetry were recited by the www.BeatsForBangladesh.org. That prompted a News and Letters Committees member to express her appreciation for the youth group envisioning a different world. We brought up the need to boycott amazon.com because of its MechanicalTurk.com website that encourages piece-meal work for next to nothing pay throughout the world.

Another Los Angeles garment worker took up workers’ solidarity against microproduction methods used by corporations which have diminished the power of unions by dispersion of piece-work production via the internet to the other side of the world. He said that workers should be aware of their rights, and that we need to take risks and not accept repression by the bosses or their threats that they will call Immigration if we demand our rights.

What we’re seeing is workers’ subjectivity challenging the objectivity of this heartless world of capitalism. Marx’s prediction that the workers of the world will unite is coming to reality.

—Manel

Grim high-tech future

Detroit —High-tech factories designed to bring together research and production are beginning to be built, touted as creating increased manufacturing in the U.S. and stimulating innovative development, like a GE facility in Schenectady, N.Y., devoted to a fluid ceramic that is poured into batteries.

These corporate efforts to unite thinking and doing are reminiscent of what Charles Denby, founding editor of *News & Letters*, described in *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker’s Journal* when new auto models were introduced for production. During regular production, the bosses were always on the workers’ backs to get out more autos, but with the new models there were always problems that were discovered.

At that time, auto companies told the foremen to leave the workers alone, because they knew that the workers knew their jobs so well that they would fix the problems that arose. Companies even put up suggestion boxes in the plants, but workers knew that if their suggestions were followed, workers would be laid off, so they kept them to themselves. Today it has reached the point where companies will pay workers up to thousands of dollars for their accepted suggestions.

There is another side to the fact that nobody knows a job like the worker who is doing it. There is a well-known expression in factories, and I heard it in the coal mines, that if you can’t break your machine any time you want to, you have no business running it. This knowledge is useful if a boss becomes too unbearable and a machine breakdown to decrease production is required to “educate” the boss.

Because of the advanced high-tech development in other countries, many of the high-pay high-tech jobs in the U.S. are also being outsourced.

In the capitalists’ view of the future, manufacturing will not be characterized by millions of workers on production lines, like the repetitive-motion production that is involved in so much manufacturing that has been outsourced from the U.S. to other low-pay countries. They envision a few highly skilled specialists in a totally different environment, with millions more workers losing their jobs to swell the ranks of the millions now unemployed. This dim future will become even dimmer unless completely transformative changes are made in the economy and society.

—Andy Phillips

WORKSHOPTALKS

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sponsored to encourage us healthcare workers to do just that. At first glance, it’s a no-brainer. Who’d not want to march along with a “get healthy” campaign, especially if one works at an HMO?

THE SINISTER SIDE OF PENALTIES

Besides, it is a voluntary program, laced with lots of fun incentives like free glucose monitors, pedometers, and lunchtime guided walks around the lake. We can keep track of our (and each other’s) progress on the company “Wellness” website. Our union reps even helped pass out glossy color brochures and Wellness Visa Cards to accumulate health credit scores.

But what began as “voluntary” wellness programs based on incentives has revealed a sinister side of penalties. Pharmacy chain CVS sparked outrage when it asked its workers to report personal health metrics, including their body fat, blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels, to the company’s insurer by May or pay a \$600 penalty.

Mohawk Industries gloated that participation in its health risk assessment program shot up to 97% after the company imposed a \$100 monthly penalty on non-participants. The company complained that participation in its previous incentives rewards program was low. Honeywell, too, reported a spike in participation after it switched from an incentive to a penalty program, charging workers \$1,000, deducted from their health savings account, for transgressions like getting a hip or knee replacement without consulting company doctors.

BACKDOOR WAGE CUTS

The penalties in these wellness incentive programs are essentially a backdoor form of wage cuts. With corporate spending on healthcare expected to reach an average of \$12,136 per employee this year, according to a study by the consulting firm Towers Watson, penalties may soon be the new norm. This points to a future in which chronic conditions such as hypertension could cost workers their jobs, or prevent them from being hired in the first place. Medical ethics and policy analysts say practices like not hiring smokers are motivated not by employers’ concerns for employees’ health, but to keep smokers off their health bill.

Industry analysts say many companies want to move from not hiring smokers to also excluding job applicants with obesity, hypertension, and other pre-existing health conditions.

Wellness becomes a slippery slope of legal discrimination and corporate intrusion. Individual privacy of health information will be a thing of the past when seeking employment in a fully corporatized world.

These programs snoop into workers’ health records in order to give employers control over the private lives of workers. Michelin’s chief of Human Resources claimed that the old incentive programs “didn’t lead to meaningful change.” He wants to see the kind of sea change afforded by a campaign of fear and intimidation to advance corporate Big Brother, like post-9/11 security directives that enabled government to encroach on ever more aspects of private lives.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: July-August marks the 60th anniversary of the historic strike in the Russian slave labor camp in Vorkuta. Following Dunayevskaya's May 1953 Letters on Hegel's Absolutes, the 1953 revolts in Russia and East Germany were formative events for Marxist-Humanism. Few agreed with her view that they were "the beginning of the end of Russian totalitarianism" until after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. This "Two Worlds: Notes From a Diary" column by Raya Dunayevskaya for Correspondence, June 12, 1954, is in the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection, #9347-48.

"You all seem to be so skeptical about the chances of a revolution in Russia. I am not sure myself. But, believe me, Russia is more than ever full of revolutionaries."

Thus Brigitte Gerland addressed her co-journalists attending the Four Power Conference in Berlin last January. Miss Gerland, a German journalist who had been arrested in 1946 and sent to a Russian concentration camp, was one of several thousand German inmates who had suddenly been amnestied for the show at the Four Power Conference. Her audience was very skeptical because she was not telling a tale of woe, but of revolt. She would have found sympathetic listeners had she engaged in an abstract discussion of whether a revolt can occur under a police state, but not when she related that one had happened.

RUSSIAN YOUTH IN REVOLT

Gerland relates that she met students from the big cities of Russia: Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa. The outstanding among these were the sons of Old Bolsheviks, that is to say, sons of the leaders of the 1917 revolution who had been executed by Stalin in the infamous Moscow Trials of 1937. Those "children of the 'generation of 1937'...had been educated in State orphanages and had managed to fight their way to the universities only by endless efforts and tricks. Now these would-be philosophers, historians or economists sat in the camp with 25 years of forced labor as their only future..." But they weren't broken or resigned.

"In their view," continues Gerland, "the Socialist State of the future would not be run by either one or several parties, but purely by workers' and peasants' 'syndicates'—they used the French word, picked from a study of the Paris Commune of 1871, which Lenin himself had hailed as his model before he seized power."

Translated, the words Marx used in describing the Paris Commune were "the self-government of the producers." In any case, the program of the youth "had

In 1953 Russian slave laborers in Vorkuta acted

'Russia more than ever full of revolutionaries...'

been born from a desperate rejection of the alternatives of the system of Stalinist oligarchy on the one hand, and of Western 'bourgeois' democracy on the other. The parliamentary forms and the capitalist economy of the West held little attraction for these young people thirsting for social justice, who, as they put it, 'were not ready to be seduced by motor cars and nylons.'"

It is this youth group which Gerland credits with the "courage, vitality and initiative that a new kind of play is now being enacted against the same old backdrop of the camp system, while the big officers of the secret police look on and do not believe their eyes."

STRIKE IN THE VORKUTA FORCED LABOR CAMP

The reference to the "new kind of play" is to the strike at Vorkuta, in European Russia. There are between 35 to 50 mines and 250,000 workers, some free, but mostly slave. Vorkuta supplies the coal for the industries of Leningrad; and no one had ever before heard, and the totalitarian bureaucracy had surely never conceived, of a strike of slave laborers. They began sending their big shots, their top names, down to the struck mines to offer some concession.

Gerland reports from her vantage point in a women's camp. She speaks of the three types of resistance: the students already mentioned, the "believers," a religious group, and the Ukrainians. The Ukrainians had all been in the underground movement. This week the Supreme Soviet of the Ukraine is in session. Premier Malenkov and Khrushchev, the First Secretary of the Russian Communist Party, are both there. The whole agricultural campaign, over which Khrushchev is boss, is dependent on this rich "breadbasket of Russia."

Of all the nationalities in Russia, the Ukrainians are the ones who are carrying on actual guerrilla warfare against Russia. It is clear that this is still going on.



A scene from the June 1953 East German revolt, whose 60th anniversary was marked in June. The uprising helped inspire the July-August 1953 Vorkuta revolt.

But at this point we are concerned only with the Ukrainians who were in this forced labor camp in Vorkuta and participated in the mine strike. At the time Frau Gerland left last Aug. 5, the strike was still going on.

Another eyewitness report by a Dr. Joseph Scholmer, who had directly participated in the strike, shows that the strike continued for several weeks. "Order" was finally restored, that is to say, troops opened

fire. Sixty-four were killed, 200 wounded.

Dr. Scholmer had been in the anti-Nazi resistance movement during World War II and arrested by the Gestapo in 1943, only to be rearrested by the Russians in 1950 and sent to a forced-labor camp for 25 years at hard labor. He was one of those amnestied and returned to Germany.

THE WAY TO FREEDOM

Dr. Scholmer was asked for the motives of the strike.

"Our motives?" he asked. "Oh, they were fantastically mixed. Some wanted a little better living and working conditions. Others were hoping for a 'new era' now that Stalin was dead. Some wanted to imitate the 17th of June in Germany, which we had heard described over Radio Moscow and in *Pravda*. Others wanted to destroy the system, and there was an old man in my barracks who cried over and over again, 'Have we torn down the barbed-wire fence yet? Is it down, is it down?'"

No, the barbed wire has not been torn down, and freedom from Russian totalitarianism was not won by the East German revolt either. But two new pages in history were written: whoever before June 17 had heard of a mass revolt against a totalitarian dictatorship? Whoever had, before July, heard of slave laborers forcing concessions from a police state? Two pages in history that have shown the way to freedom.

That is why the former inmates, Dr. Scholmer and Miss Gerland, speak not so much of suffering as of revolt, of freedom. Not yet? "Not yet," they too say, and go back to the quote from the great Russian poet, Pushkin, who back in 1827 wrote to his imprisoned friends:

Deep in the Siberian mine,
Keep your patience proud;
The bitter toil shall not be lost,
The rebel thought unbowed...
The heavy-hanging chains will fall,
The walls will crumble at a word;
And Freedom greet you in the light,
And brothers give you back the sword.

Tom Rockmore's *Marx After Marxism*

Duquesne University Professor Tom Rockmore's book, *Marx After Marxism*, takes up Marx, Hegel and what he refers to as "Marxism," i.e., post-Marx Marxism. When he speaks of Marxism, he is speaking of the post-Marx distortions of Marx's ideas and methods, not Marxism *per se*. Although the book was published over a decade ago, it is still in print and is used as a college text around the country. It is important because it gives the reader a fuller grasp of the true relationship between Marx and Hegel, a topic which is still widely misunderstood by many so-called Marxists.

While Rockmore clearly wants to clarify the relationship of the two men—something which is still vitally needed in a period of philosophical and ideological confusion—his book would have benefited from referencing Raya Dunayevskaya's *Philosophy and Revolution*, which covers in depth much of the same ground and more. It has the advantage of being written from the vantage point of a revolutionary looking at the failure of 1968 when the masses were in the streets, but counter-revolution ended up ruling. Thus her contention that a philosophy of revolution is indispensable gives her discussion of the Marx/Hegel relationship an immediacy for today's struggles.

MARX AND ENGELS NOT THE SAME

Rockmore's first point is that all post-Marx Marxists identify Marxism as what Engels and his followers developed and that one should not confuse the ideas of Marx with that of post-Marx Marxism. Rather, in recovering Marx from his distorters, one must understand the foundational role that the Hegelian dialectic played in the development of Marx's ideas during his whole life, a point which Rockmore illustrates by examining all the substantial writings of Marx which have a Hegelian core. Throughout this work, Rockmore emphasizes Marx's debt to Hegel.

Rockmore notes that throughout his life Marx struggled with appropriated, and elaborated on the ideas of Hegel. He flatly rejects, as did Dunayevskaya,

that the "mature" Marx broke with Hegel. Rather he sees Marx: "...as located 'within' and working out some Hegelian views while criticizing or rejecting others, which he may or may not have understood." He comes out strongly for the idea that "the philosophical dimension of Marx's position cannot be separated from its economic dimension."

Rockmore is sharply critical of Engels for elaborating a dialectic that had little in common with the Hegelian dialectic of Marx and propagating a "popularistic" reduction of philosophy. *Marx After Marxism* stresses that, from the time of his doctoral dissertation until the completion of *Capital*, Hegel and Hegelianism were a major part of Marx's writings.

MARX, ALWAYS THE HEGELIAN

Rockmore notes that the "official" Marxists, citing Althusser as an example, see Marx and Hegel as two diametrically opposed thinkers. Rockmore rejects this, and argues that Marx's theory of modern industrial society is based on a Hegelian perspective, although one would have to disagree with his description of Marx as an "idealist" if that term is understood in the traditional Marxist manner. To be a Hegelian is not to be a pure idealist.

The great contribution of Hegel was his historical approach to philosophy and the development of humanity, as was Marx's. Marx was a Hegelian. For Marx, the development of the class struggle was always placed in a historical context. To the extent that Marx argued against Hegel, it was against right-wing Hegelianism. Rockmore concludes, "The main Hegelian legacy in Marx's position concerns the transition to a historical conception of human beings and society."

Finally, Rockmore emphasizes the many ways that Marx built upon and went beyond Hegel, especially in his understanding of the economic foundations of modern capitalist society: "Marx's theories remain and will continue to remain relevant for us as long as money is in short supply, and as long as problems intrinsic to the modern industrial world, such as poverty, differences in real opportunity between the rich and the poor, and similar economic difficulties continue to endure."

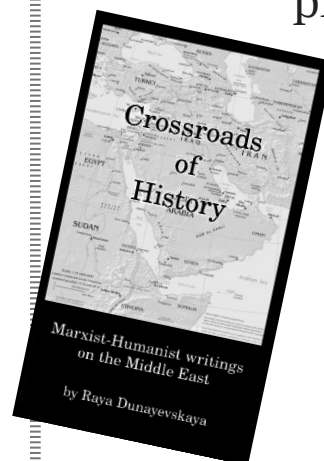
—Michael Gilbert

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Communization theory and its discontents truncate Marx’s dialectic

by Ron Kelch

“...after labor, from mere means of life, has itself become the prime necessity of life...only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind...”

—Marx, Critique of the Gotha Program*

The persisting economic crisis has spurred new interest in Karl Marx, for example, at well-attended, self-organized, free Public School (PS) classes in Oakland, Calif. Much of the discussion there has been around the depth of the crisis, pointing to Marx’s vision of a total revolutionary break from capitalism to a non-capitalist future. The latter is crucial, because the many revolutions that have transformed from within into monstrous authoritarian regimes have dampened thought about a possible alternative. “Communization Theory,” the topic of a PS class, projects Marx’s dialectic as a total break with capitalism but without posing a need for dialectical mediation beyond capitalism.

Endnotes, an anti-vanguardist theoretical site centered in London, puts out a theoretical journal which began in 2008 as a critical exchange between former members of the journal *Aufheben* and the French journal *Théorie Communiste* which came out of the post-1968 French “ultra-left.” An article “Communisation and Value-form Theory” from 2010 (<http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/4>) constructs a line of development uniting Situationists, Communisation Theorists, and proponents of the “systematic dialectic” of Chris Arthur and Tony Smith with this dramatic conclusion:

The overcoming of capitalist social relations cannot involve a simple “liberation of labour”; rather, the only “way out” is the suppression of value itself—of the value-form which posits abstract labour as the measure of wealth. Communisation is the destruction of the commodity-form and the simultaneous establishment of immediate social relations between individuals. Value, understood as a total form of social mediation, cannot be got rid of by halves.

New “immediate social relations between individuals” means that revolution as communisation has no particular subjects like women or even workers. In this view, capital as subject has finally homogeneously subsumed all humanity. This leaves only individuals in their absolute singularity who abolish all divisions within social life. Further, the article claims that its conclusion—that the mediating totality of the value-form is replaced by immediate social relations—flows from Marx on “The Fetish Character of the Commodity” in Chapter One of *Capital*, which is quoted profusely at the beginning of the article. **Nothing could be further from the truth.**

THE POWER OF ABSTRACTION

After the people of Paris created a new way of organizing their lives in the 1871 Commune, it became clear to Marx that the form in which reality presents itself to those who create that reality through their labor is absolutely a function of social relations. The commodity-form is the real-life reign of the concept of labor-time in things that rules over their creators. Human relations actually are social relations between things. The only

way out is production run by freely associated producers, for whom expending their efforts would then be done “in full self-awareness” as part of the whole. Thus, for Marx, **far from disappearing, social mediation becomes a conscious lived experience** (BF, 171).

The fantasy of immediate human relations is itself **capitalism’s creation**. Humans **always** relate to each other through abstractions which, says Marx, specifically distinguishes humans from the “beasts” (CW, 30:232). The capitalist epoch forces humankind to openly confront **all** the ways the “power of abstraction” (BF, 90) shapes how humans reproduce their material and spiritual reality.

Thus, revolution for Marx was multi-linear with multi-dimensional subjects even as he focused on the self-alienating abstraction that shapes the capitalist epoch that continuously tries to negate previous forms of human relations. What happens after the revolution cannot be left at the mere negative of getting rid of the mediation of value in things without confronting mediation, that is, the power of abstraction in a positive sense.

Put another way, that means fully bringing to the fore the positive in the negative, that is, the mediation of the self-determination of the idea in what Marx called new passions and new forces striving to reconstruct society on new foundations (BF, 928). Even a cursory look at today’s revolutions reveals the concrete need to realize philosophy, namely the Hegelian dialectic as Marx recreated it (see “The 200th Anniversary of Hegel’s Absolute Method,” Nov.-Dec. 2012 *N&L*).

PRACTICE AS A FORM OF THEORY: WOMEN AND MARX’S DIALECTIC

The Women’s Liberation Movement and Marx’s designation in 1844 of the Man/Woman relation as the most fundamental are poles from which to investigate, practically and theoretically, one of those “new passions” of our epoch of mass movements that are also in themselves forms of theory. This year has seen the emergence of a global movement from practice against rape and violence toward women, in concert with an attempt to continue and deepen an ongoing revolution in Egypt (see “From India to Egypt to U.S., women fighting for freedom,” March-April *N&L*).

Something has changed since 1979, when the founder of Marxist-Humanism, Raya Dunayevskaya, pointed out—against the prevailing equivocation on the left—that the counterrevolution within the revolution in Iran took the form of attacking women’s freedom even as she pointed to the need for **“a philosophy of total liberation such as is Marx’s Humanism”** (*Crossroads of History*, 67).

Today even relatively conservative Catholic and Muslim leaders reluctantly endorsed a modest plan at a UN conference to combat violence against women in response to the global upsurge against the barbarism foisted on women. Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, however, strongly objected to it as clashing with Islamic principles and being against their culture. What they no doubt didn’t expect is that the head of Egypt’s delegation, Mervat Tallawy, had her own idea:

“I believe in women’s cause. I don’t take money from the government. I work voluntarily. If they want to kick me out they can...Women are the slaves of this age. This is unacceptable, particularly in our region.”

Culture is no fossilized object but undergoes living development, a living development which is accelerated exponentially by the process of revolution.

The prominent participation of women in pre-revolution strikes and in the mass movement in Egypt’s Tahrir Square, which brought down Mubarak, created new human relations. Lately, women who continue to practice a public role in moving the revolution forward are being singled out for rape. Counter-revolution gives the revolution a fixed form, whether as “culture” or a constitution in place of an ongoing unfolding of the multi-faceted idea of freedom.

A lack of theory to meet women’s reason in actual revolution didn’t save Communization Theory (CT) from disputes over the issue of women. The PS class in it took up an article, “Communization and the Abolition of Gender,” with the author, Maya Gonzalez, present (from *Communization and its Discontents*, edited by Benjamin Noys, on-line at: <http://www.minorcompositions.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/CommunizationDiscontents-web.pdf>). Gonzalez, who is part of

Endnotes, challenges the claim that CT “involves the abolition of gender as much as the abolition of capitalist social relations,” noting that they do “little more than suture gender to an already existing theory of the capitalist mode of production.”

Yet Gonzalez, following CT’s unilinear dialectic, also does “little more than suture” women’s pre-capitalist role of sexual reproduction onto capitalist relations, making childbirth a principal force of production as the unacknowledged point of reproduction of labor power and capitalist relations. Accepting CT’s view, Gonzalez writes: “The revolution as communization has no subject, no affirmable identity—not the Worker, the Multitude, or the Precariat. The real basis of any such revolutionary identity has melted away” (220).

Rather than engage Marx’s original (1844) dialectical unity in difference between women and men, Gonzalez ends with the concept of equality of workers that depends on a technological breakthrough that takes women out of reproduction with test-tube babies. Such a conclusion only flows from reducing revolution to an immediate response to the development of capital as an all-encompassing mediating subject that finally subsumes all humanity. CT’s view that capital makes possible the “immediate overcoming of all separations” (222) leaves no place for the universal as a new social individual in all her/his singularity emerging **through** confronting the particular barriers now dismissed as “affirmable identities.”

Why, in spite of the centrality of Man/Woman in Marx’s philosophic beginnings, do Marxists fail to address its integrality to his whole body of thought, especially when our time has seen the unearthing of Marx’s vast late writings on the family and pre-capitalist ethnographic studies? As Marx put it in 1844:

...the secret of the relationship of man to man finds its unambiguous, definitive, open, obvious expression in the relationship of man to woman, and in this way the direct, natural relationship between the sexes. The direct, natural, necessary relationship of man to man is the relationship of man to woman...From the character of this relation it follows to what degree man as a species has become human... (CW, 3:296-7)

Marx’s reference to “the direct, natural relationship between the sexes” certainly includes within it sexuality and the reproduction of the species. The principle Marx unleashed still speaks to the concrete unfolding of the freedom idea in its multiple manifestations today. That principle was always seeing the reach for human freedom within any given level or dimension of material necessity. To grasp this aspect of Marx’s humanism as total uprooting, one needs to reiterate the quality in the phrase “become human” in the quantitative measure “to what degree man as a species has become human.”

In 1844 Marx’s concept of alienation **precedes** private property out of which capitalism emerged. Whatever stage of development, the determinate character of being human, humanity’s species character, is human activity as free, conscious life-affirming activity in contrast to labor as a mere means to life (CW, 3:276). The same idea reappears as a continuing principle of the future in Marx’s 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

This human species character is the idea that measures the particular revolutionary dimension, whether that is peasants toiling in the fields, African-American slaves, women struggling to be whole from within the patriarchal family or workers fighting both for a shorter work day and against the domination of capital, the machine, in their everyday working lives. The fundamental question that persists before, during and after overcoming production for value is: Is the human being the free, conscious architect of her own life activity or is that activity a mere means, whether in relation to her capacity to produce new humans or as a satisfier of needs? Within Man/Woman, says Marx, one sees the degree to which a human being is needed as a human being.

When Marx implicitly brings in human reproduction by alluding to the natural species connection in the man/woman relation, he is not talking about reproduction in relation to capitalism, namely, the point of reproduction of labor-power, through which many feminist Marxists search for theoretical validity for women’s subjectivity. No, Marx is talking about multiple paths to freedom within the realm of material necessity. Our epoch shows that revolutions live or die depending on whether they deepen along these multiple paths which confront **now** what happens after a revolutionary break with capitalism’s particular form of self-alienating, self-deluding social necessity.

* Alternate translation in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works* (International Publishers: New York) vol. 24, p. 87, further referenced as “CW” with the volume number and page number in the text, except for the commonly used Ben Fowkes translation of *Capital*, (London: Penguin, 1976), which is referenced with “BF.”



The self-organization of the masses in Paris in 1871, in which women played a leading role, helped Marx deepen his philosophy of liberation.

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ON THE MARXIST-HUMANIST PERSPECTIVES

The Draft Perspectives (“Capitalism’s violence, masses’ revolt show need for total view,” May-June *N&L*) was effective in ending with Arab Spring and philosophy. It comes just shy of saying Egypt didn’t succeed because of a void in philosophy by saying a void of philosophy is being felt. How can a total philosophy make a difference? We see who has the better military power, ask whom should the U.S. arm, which rebels. But the Draft Perspectives is talking about something completely different.

David M’oto
Bay Area, Calif.

I like the discussion of nuclear brinkmanship in the Draft Perspectives. I was surprised that Israel wasn’t mentioned first in that regard. I was trying to sort out what I think about Iran. I made the mistake of seeing the movie *Argo*, which was offensive. An Iranian woman was furious because the film collapsed the four years after the revolution—including the joy of getting rid of the Shah, which was not even presented—into getting the Americans out.

Jerry
Northern California

A woman from Ethiopia told me that what is in *N&L* is not found in other newspapers. Even in this day of the internet it’s still important to have a paper. Prisoners, many in Third World countries, many poor people, don’t have internet access.

Dan P.
Detroit

How do we present the philosophic structure of the nuclear brink being played out? The fact that the U.S. spends more on its military than the next ten countries combined manifests a sham allegiance to democracy and peace. The lie of the non-proliferation treaty is that it is really a framework for proliferation. Whatever the particular issue, the philosophic depth exposes not just the difference/opposition between the lie of the show and the reality, but the total contradiction. The contradiction, when experienced as a living one within the subject, drives toward a resolution.

Urszula Wislanka
Oakland, Calif.

I am impressed with the depth of the detail of the situation we’re in as presented in the Draft Perspectives. I am proud to be associated with this organization, which puts out such a document. It reviews so much of what is going on. It may seem bleak, since the situation is so dire. But people are fighting back.

Dee Perkins
Phoenix

My first national gathering of News and Letters Committees was amazing. All the reports—which covered local, national, and international struggles—

were clear and the dialog after was exciting. There was a feeling of camaraderie and we had many opportunities to talk about *News & Letters* and our work. I learned a great deal from the presentations by new and veteran members. Everyone pitched in, especially in the care and feeding of out-of-towners. It was a pleasure to attend a gathering of Left dedicated activists without partisan wrangling. News and Letters Committees is a great organization and the people are great people. I encourage everyone to contact our Chicago office or a local branch and think about joining.

Michael Gilbert
New York

CROSSROADS OF HISTORY

Enclosed please find \$10 for the book *Crossroads of History: Marxist-Humanist Writings on the Middle East* by Raya Dunayevskaya, and please renew the subscription to *News & Letters*. I regret learning that *N&L* is now published every two months as opposed to monthly, particularly during this present economic crisis, which should be a main topic of discussion within the pages of *N&L*.

Latino prisoner
Terre Haute, Indiana

Thanks to the donor who made it possible to send me *Crossroads of History* and *Pelican Bay Hunger Strikers*. I appreciate having some radical words to read in a very reactionary environment.

Prisoner
Bastrop, Texas

As this is being written, it remains unclear whether or how the U.S. administration will follow through on its stated intention of providing lethal aid to Syrian rebels it deems worthy of support. From the first massacres of civilians by the Assad regime, it’s been clear that the U.S. and its allies have had no particular interest in Assad’s revolutionary overthrow. The 100,000 dead were not enough of a “red line”?

At the Left Forum in New York in June, Syrian activist Joseph Daher scoffed at the idea, common to many on the pro-Assad “Left,” that the U.S. has already armed anti-Assad rebels. Daher described a situation in which only Assad’s forces and the fundamentalists are well-armed. He probably put his finger on the U.S. government’s motives when he said, “If you want us to lose, just keep doing what you’re doing. Nothing.”

Gerry Emmett
Chicago

At a meeting in Chicago, people were nominally Left and yet very hostile to the idea that Assad and Quaddafi were no longer revolutionary—as if they ever were. Those people said, “It’s im-

therefore legitimate. Nonsense! The state’s function is to protect order, which means protecting class rule, whether the enemy is Al Qaeda, the French President, Occupy Wall Street, workers on strike, or some small peace group in Oregon—all of whom we know have been spied on. The state’s need for secrecy is above all to keep the mass of people from understanding that we are the enemy they’re repressing.

Revolutionary
Southern California

What Snowden told the world is frightening. Even if you don’t fear Obama, somewhere along the line a Right-wing ideologue with some power will get his hands on that information and start gunning for the Left and for liberals, and then watch out! It’s not like it hasn’t happened before.

Concerned citizen
Bremerton, Wash.

READERS’ VIEWS

moral for you to be at this meeting with your position on Syria.” Others said it is our duty to oppose everything the U.S. government does. Really? I don’t think that’s how to get to a new society. What’s immoral is to support dictators just because they also happen to be against the U.S.

January
Chicago

Marx was opposed to those who called themselves Marxists, yet who wanted to “sit out” the Civil War. We have the same battle today with post-Marx Marxists who actually are cheerleaders for crushing Bosnian self-determination or for Assad’s massacre against his own people. It’s a farce and a tragedy having “Marxists” defend Assad and Russia in Syria.

Bob McGuire
Chicago

●

LABOR UNITY

Trade Fair workers have returned to work but conditions are not good. As a strong supporter of the workers, I think the union made a mistake in stopping the energetic mass picket lines of store workers, and going to a system of rotating pickets. It became hard to tell people to boycott the stores since there were no pickets except occasionally. But something more profound is involved.

Trade Fair workers belonged to two different locals: meat department workers and everyone else. Under the contract and U.S. labor law, the workers in the local with a contract, as sympathetic as they may have been, could not legally walk out in support of the meat department workers. So it was business as usual for Trade Fair. This old-style craft unionism will be the death of the labor movement. Here’s hoping that next time, everyone will walk and defy the draconian labor laws.

Union supporter
Queens, N.Y.

You hear a lot about sweatshops in the Third World, but I live in Los Angeles and we have the same thing here.

Healthcare worker
Los Angeles

I was really taken with the archives column where Dunayevskaya said “Hegel’s Absolute Idea is for workers.” She said she wanted a worker present at meetings discussing the writing of her book, because unless the most profound ideas are expressed in a way for workers to understand, it has no meaning. You have to use a language that doesn’t water down Hegel but is clearly understandable.

Retiree
California

Manufacturers in Bangladesh and many other countries are so squeezed by retailers that their need for surplus value forces them to keep wages low and hours long, and to cut corners. Just as Wal-Mart executives don’t have to order managers to have workers work overtime off the clock, because they impose cost and productivity requirements unattainable without cheating, so Wal-Mart demands production costs and timetables of suppliers that can only be achieved by driving the workers hard and harder. The corporations at the top of the global heap force down wages not only for their own employees but for those of other companies. A legal fig leaf hides their actual control of production. They use their worldwide reach and cut-throat competition to drive down other costs such as environmental or building safety regulations.

Observer
Memphis

●

WOMEN’S LIBERATION

Marx said a lot about what it means to be human, including being “in the absolute movement of becoming.” I love that; we would say in the Women’s Liberation Movement that we did not know what a free woman was or would be because she has never existed. Isn’t this why Dunayevskaya wrote that it would take a revolution for all of us to “become whole”? The absolute movement of becoming is another way of saying revolution in permanence.

Women’s Liberationist
Chicago

As the articles “Violence ‘normalized’” and “Rape and lies in Syria” (May-June *N&L*) report, violence against women—in its many forms—is callously ignored, pushed aside or lied

about the world over. Not enough people take it seriously. We need a world where all people deeply respect each other!

Elise
Chicago

A new report by One Law for All, “Siding with the Oppressor: The Pro-Islamist Left,” exposes Stop the War Coalition, Respect Party, Unite Against Fascism and individuals such as Ken Livingstone and George Galloway and their agenda and methods. This section of the Left uses accusations of racism and Islamophobia and a conflation of Muslim with Islamist in order to defend Islamism and Islam rather than out of any concern for prejudice against Muslims or their rights, particularly since Muslims or those labelled as such are the first victims of Islamism and are on the frontlines of resisting it. The report is available as a free download on One Law for All’s website.

Maryam Namazie
London

●

OUTRAGE AGAINST RACISM

The trial of George Zimmerman, who killed Black teenager Trayvon Martin in Florida, resonates with almost every Black man in the U.S. Most have been made into objects of suspicion at least once, humiliated and degraded by the authorities. Detroit’s first Black mayor Coleman A. Young was elected on a wave of outrage against a police crack-down against Black men in 1973. In New York today, communities are fighting back against a Stop and Frisk law under which 80% of those stopped are Black and Latino men. Trayvon Martin’s murder reminds us of the needed social change, whatever the trial’s outcome.

Former teacher
Detroit

●

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES RESIST

I am sick of the way the government is trying to take away the benefits of the personal assistants who make it possible for those of us with disabilities to function. They want to lower their hours, their pay, their health insurance and everything else. Don’t they understand that doing these things affects the lives of two people, not just one? Don’t they understand that if I don’t have a personal assistant I can’t get out of bed in the morning? They think that because we are disabled we won’t or can’t fight back. We have to keep proving them wrong, or they will take away everything.

Disabled activist
Chicago

BLOWING THE WHISTLE ON CAPITALIST STATE REPRESSION

It’s ridiculous that all the media jumped on the bandwagon of calling Edward Snowden—who told the world about the U.S. government over-the-top and outrageous surveillance of all our phone and internet records—a “leaker.” He’s a whistleblower or a muckraker, letting the world know the shaky ground the U.S. stands on when it touts its freedom and the privacy of the individual. Words matter and the media should know that better than most.

Media critic
Illinois

The secrets Snowden revealed show that the government is spying on pretty much everyone’s phone calls, emails, and other electronic communications. Almost all of the debate—left, right, and center—is confined within the bounds of how much spying is warranted, assuming that the state is there to protect the people and is

DON'T
SPY
ON ME

therefore legitimate. Nonsense! The state’s function is to protect order, which means protecting class rule, whether the enemy is Al Qaeda, the French President, Occupy Wall Street, workers on strike, or some small peace group in Oregon—all of whom we know have been spied on. The state’s need for secrecy is above all to keep the mass of people from understanding that we are the enemy they’re repressing.

Revolutionary
Southern California

What Snowden told the world is frightening. Even if you don’t fear Obama, somewhere along the line a Right-wing ideologue with some power will get his hands on that information and start gunning for the Left and for liberals, and then watch out! It’s not like it hasn’t happened before.

Concerned citizen
Bremerton, Wash.

CAPITALISM STOMPS ON PEOPLE, ANIMALS AND PLANET

A developer plans to build a 55-acre \$195-300 million sports facility in Chicago. At least \$100 million is from taxpayers. It will have a basketball arena for DePaul University. One site mentioned was Washington Park, which already has many of the amenities that will be in the new facility. That neighborhood has been devastated by poverty and is being taken over by white people moving into the area. The area has been called “underperforming” by the City, which says the facility will foster “economic growth.” At the same time, Chicago is closing 49 public schools on the west and south sides, also calling them “underperforming.” The human, logical thing to do is to skip the sports facility and use that money to keep open and improve those 49 schools. Many students will now have to cross gang territory to get to their new schools. And one school is sending its 400 students to a school that only has 200 students now. Parents are worried about overcrowding in the classroom and whether there will be enough resources, especially for disabled kids who may need extra help.

Suzanne Rose
Chicago

As on Chicago’s South Side, gentrification, a systematic destruction of communities of color, is happening in cities all over the U.S. We’re talking about people’s lives. Greed and power put human needs second, as opposed to Marxist-Humanism which embodies a belief in the full development of the person. Erich Fromm led me to Marx’s 1844 Manuscripts and his essay on alienation. As long as we don’t control our lives we are alienated from our own reality. Social estrangement is related to community struggles. The slogan of immigrants that “No one is illegal” shows that we have to create a society where that is in fact a reality.

Labor defender
New York City

The reality we’re facing is daunting: the more aware I am of the idea of freedom, the more aware I become of unfreedoms. The yuppifying of cities is a real estate grab. It happened in New York and Toronto, now it’s happening to San Francisco. The environmental movement seems to be at odds with workers. Environmentalists need to be challenged on Not In My Back Yard and shaming as a strategy. The question of “what kind of labor” is now posed also as “what are we building, not just how.”

Living in the city
San Francisco



Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn signed a bill to allow fracking. What are our legislators thinking of? We get lies and more lies. We know regulations don’t protect anything. What happened to the Gulf of Mexico and the Sea of Valdez? There are no extra jobs; the jobs go to outsiders who drive millions of gallons of water and toxic chemicals into the land, where earthquakes are happening in Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Texas. Please sign our manifesto at <http://www.dontfracturreillinois.net/anti-fracking-manifesto-from-the-people-of-illinois-to-the-nation/>

Kathy Cummings
Illinois

I attended the Robert Stone film “Pandora’s Promise” at what I thought would be a discussion about nuclear energy but it was one-sided. Each pro-nuclear person was portrayed as reasonable while anti-nuclear folks were portrayed as hysterical, purely emotional. Disingenuously, many of the pro-nuclear folks claimed they were once anti-nuke. Questions and comments were taken from the audience, but the panel members put down anti-nuke commentators. I am disappointed that the event was so one-sided rather than a real debate.

Environmentally aware
Chicago

I’m not an animal rights activist. I believe that we need to make this a better world for humans first. But pictures or videos of farmers inflicting senseless pain upon a multitude of innocent animals infuriate me. And now agribusiness lobbies from Iowa, Florida and Minnesota have bills aimed at punishing animal rights activists and whistleblowers, painting them as “eco-terrorists.” They want to deny people their right to the truth. This seems crazy. It’s those inflicting abuse on the animals who are “eco-terrorists,” not the activist who takes risks to record and expose this cruelty.

A reader
Midwest

THUNDER OF FREEDOM

Sue Sojourner’s book, *Thunder of Freedom*, has been published by the University Press of Kentucky in a wonderful hardbound edition. A veteran of the civil rights movement, she worked as an activist in Holmes County, Mississippi, from 1964 through 1969. Her book tells of the real dangers and fears that the local activists experienced and how they built one of the most effective grassroots movements in Mississippi.

It is marred somewhat by a “writing consultant’s” efforts to frame the narrative in terms of “leadership” and administrative-mentality. After all, during much of the 1960s, people of the movement acted with a clear sense of participatory democracy, grassroots involvement, spontaneity, direct action, and community solidarity. We did not act to create “leadership” cadres.

I also recommend the following books: *Indignant Heart* by Charles Denby, the autobiography of a black activist; and *Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles* by John Alan. Both were published by my friends in News and Letters Committees.

Seamas Cain
Minnesota

FROM BEHIND BARS



I find *N&L* very insightful. It speaks on the broader issues around the world that this country’s mainstream media fail to

do. I do want to thank the many people who continue to donate the funds for prisoners who can’t afford to receive this insightful newspaper.

Prisoner
Houtzdale, Penn.

Thank you so much for the awesome and informative mind inferno that is contained in your newspaper. I pass them on so others can exercise their minds. We are not allowed to have Marxist materials in our library because they say it leads to “riotous behavior.” I would like to start a library in my cell locker so I can teach and educate through materials not otherwise provided. I am indigent and without family so obtaining materials is hard. I encourage other offenders to stand up for their rights and not become victims of this capitalist tyranny we call prison.

Prisoner
Snyder, Texas

When the masses of people wake up and fight the power as we are supposed to, only then will the war machine, the oppressor, the repressor be destroyed and its walls come crumbling down. Reporting live from within new Folsom State Prison, stand strong!

Prisoner
Represa, Calif.

TO OUR READERS: Can you donate \$5, the price of a subscription, for a prisoner who cannot pay for one? It will be shared with many others. A donation of \$8 pays for a subscription plus the new Pelican Bay Hunger Strike pamphlet to be sent to a prisoner.

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Turkey: Chicago is with you!

Editor’s note: Demonstrations were held throughout June in Chicago, as in many cities around the world, in solidarity with the occupation of Gezi Park in Istanbul, Turkey. The chants included, “Erdogan resign!” “Occupy Turkey, you are not alone,” and, “Occupy Chicago, you are not alone.” Here are some of the voices from Chicago’s June 3 demonstration.

For over a decade, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) has been limiting our freedoms. For example, they recently tried to ban alcohol after 10:00 PM. We had enough of it. Gezi Park in Taksim Square is like Central Park in New York. Prime Minister Erdogan’s administration wanted to knock it down and build a shopping mall, just to earn more money.

What started as an environmental protest in Taksim Square was non-violent. As soon as the protest started, the police started attacking with gas bombs. It grew to represent the fight against the suppressive government. That’s why we’re here. People have been killed. Many have been wounded, even blinded, because of the bombs.

The fact that protests spread so fast signifies that the modern Turkish people have had enough of this administration. The government changed the law and the only way we can express ourselves is by protesting.

—Young woman from Turkey

In Turkey there is pressure on the freedom of speech

Immigrants rally

Los Angeles—on June 13, 500 immigrants and their supporters held a press conference at a downtown immigrant detention center to protest the mass detention and deportations of undocumented immigrants under the “Secure Community” (SC) policies. SC, initiated by the Bush administration and continued by Obama’s, targets primarily Latino immigrants through cooperation between the Immigration Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) and local police throughout the U.S.

Organized by CHIRLA for Father’s Day under the theme of “family unity,” speakers made the point that immigrants are mostly economic migrant workers, and being undocumented does not make them criminals. A mariachi band played and sang for those detained inside and activists shouted in unison at the prison windows: “*Feliz día del padre*” and “Happy Father’s Day.”

Afterwards, we marched to the L.A. County Twin Tower Prison, where many immigrants are detained. We chanted: “*Obama, escucha, estamos en la lucha!*” (Listen, Obama, we’re in the struggle!) Many unions were there along with other organizations. Signs included: “Keep Families Together,” “Immigration Reform 2013,” and “Family means no one gets left behind.”

The rally ended by all participants being asked to pressure Congress to pass a humane immigration reform bill as fast as possible.

—Basho



by Suzanne Rose

The disabilities rights group ADAPT demonstrated its frustration with the Obama Administration in April in Washington, D.C., crashing through barricades at Pennsylvania and 17th Street and blocking an entrance to the White House. At a rally outside the White House, 41 people were arrested. ADAPT gave the administration failing grades for leadership, integrity and engagement. “In nearly every way, President Obama and his administration have failed to live up to the promises about community living that he made during his presidential campaigns,” said Josue Rodriguez of Memphis.

Campaigners have demonstrated in Cornwall, England, following the re-election of a councilor who previously said disabled children “should be put down.” Collin Brewer resigned from the Cornwall Council in February over those remarks. But in May he was voted back in. Protester Pete Skea, who has cerebral palsy, wanted to know exactly how Brewer thought he should have been “put down” as a child.

An April ruling in Los Angeles, Calif., by a federal judge says that immigrants who are too mentally disabled to represent themselves in deportation proceedings are entitled to free legal assistance. Until now, some defendants stayed in detention centers for years after a judge declared them incompetent. Previously immigrants fighting deportation had to either hire private attorneys or represent themselves.



Franklin Dmitryev/News & Letters

and on television and newspapers. None of them are telling the true story. Erdogan doesn’t care about us. He tells the police to attack people using gas bombs.

It became more than protecting a park. It’s protecting our democracy. We want Turkey to be secular, and our Prime Minister wants Islamic culture. He’s behaving like a dictator. We don’t want to fight. What we want is to stop the violence of the police. We want democracy.

—Young Turkish woman

Seven days ago I was in Gezi Park, with friends, and we had no idea what was about to happen. They asked me if we have nice parks in Chicago with trees. They must have known what was going on. I must have irritated them because I said our lakefront is all parks.

A lot of the population is not going along with Erdogan. I support those standing up for freedom of speech and not to have their secular state eroded.

I’m a working man, I try to do what I can when I can. I felt a connection to the working people in Turkey, with the people on the street, sharing their concerns about banning liquor after 10:00 PM, and public displays of affection. They were really upset about that. There’s a whole myriad of issues including that they’re tearing down historical monuments and green spaces so they can build more malls.

—Working-class Chicagoan

We are here because we want to support our people in Turkey. Erdogan has been making bad decisions for 11 years. We are telling him this is not right, you have to do the best thing for your people. But he was just doing things for money, for his benefit. He made a lot of bad changes on health, social security, education. I just came to the U.S. ten days ago.

With the occupation of Gezi Park, Turkish people are standing up because we don’t want that government anymore. We want to show our emotions and our thoughts in this way.

Turkey is not a religious country. But this government is not letting us be democratic. Newspapers are always printing pictures like women in head scarves. This is not Turkey.

—Young man from Turkey

Conflict at Left Forum

New York, N.Y.—The annual Left Forum conference drew over 4,000 participants here on June 7-9. The atmosphere was quite different from last year, when an infusion of youth from Occupy Wall Street brought with them the excitement of an actual movement. (See articles on workshops, pages 2 and 11.)

Some of the most interesting participants this year were young people, like two women college students from Vermont who passionately discussed sexual assault on their campus and their excitement about the idea of writing their struggle up for *News & Letters*.

Young women and men asked many of the probing questions at the two workshops that included speakers from News and Letters Committees: “Human Paths of Development *vs.* Capitalist Development,” and “From Detroit to the Marcellus Shale, from South America to Central Europe: Struggles for sustainable human development.” Both featured a lively exchange of ideas.

Two controversies roiled the conference. News and Letters and some others have established solidarity with the revolution in Syria, in opposition to Assad as well as to attempts to hijack the revolution by fundamentalists, and with no illusions about the U.S. government’s role (see “Turkey, Syria and Iran at crossroads of world revolt,” p. 1). Pro-Assad leftists equated the spontaneous Syrian rebellion with U.S. imperialism.

Some participants demanded uncritical support of Bolivia’s government, whereas we and others denounced its attacks on striking workers and on Indigenous people resisting “development” plans. The controversy was amplified because Bolivian Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera was a speaker at the closing plenary.

When Garcia began to speak, people held up signs demanding the release of imprisoned strikers as well as “U.S. imperialism hands off Bolivia!” The organizers suddenly canceled the question/comment session. Audience members demanded a comment session.

Garcia quoted Karl Marx to whitewash his government’s capitalist path of development. But his conclusions were the opposite of Marx’s, who held a multilinear concept of development such that not every society necessarily had to go through capitalism. Garcia, however, argued that the Bolivian state is revolutionary and whatever strengthens the state advances the revolution; therefore, Indigenous peoples and striking workers who oppose state plans are counter-revolutionary.

Cutting off comments on a controversial topic, at a conference that is supposed to encourage free debate, speaks volumes about the contradictions within the Left.

—Marxist-Humanist participants

EDITORIAL

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The practices developed in war are used on prisoners at home, just as practices developed to deal with U.S. prisoners become the basis for conduct against the “enemy” in, for example, Iraq’s Abu Ghraib. While the world was horrified in 2006 by images of debasing humiliation perpetrated by Pennsylvania prison-guards-turned-soldiers, prisoners in the U.S. were not at all surprised, as similar humiliations are their daily fare.

Just as the criminal injustice system is an essential part of preserving the exploitative structure of society, so the revolts, voices and thoughts of prisoners are part of the dialectics of liberation needed to revolutionize society and break its class structure.

On July 8 California prisoners being held in solitary confinement at the Pelican Bay “security housing unit” (SHU) for indeterminate periods will resume their hunger strike (see “SHU hunger strike,” p. 9). The demands—end group punishment; abolish “debriefing”; end the torture of long-term solitary confinement; provide nutritious food and expand available programs—share one basis: to recognize prisoners as human beings.

In forging the unity needed to hold a hunger strike and change the condition of all prisoners, they are rejecting the racial and ethnic divisions fostered and exploited by prison authorities, and reaching to create new human relations.

When prisoners anywhere go on a hunger strike, they are saying: you are killing us. And if we die, we want our death to have significance so others won’t experience the same torture and injustice.

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT = TORTURE

Solitary confinement, institutionalized long-term denial of any human contact, is an indictment of the whole system—from Guantanamo Bay to California’s Department of “Corrections and Rehabilitation,” which tortures over 11,000 people in solitary. The U.S. admits to having over 80,000 people in solitary at any one time.

The struggle against solitary confinement has shaken up and inspired new sections of the population. The success of Mississippi’s prisons in reducing violence by shutting down solitary was so spectacular that Emmitt Sparkman, the head of its Department of Corrections, is now an open advocate of closing SHUs.

Bills currently debated in Texas, Florida and California would ban the solitary confinement of youth. A special report on torture by the UN has called for an international ban on solitary for any person under 18 years of age.² A national conversation on the use of solitary in detention camps, where people have not, in fact, been convicted of any crime, is beginning.

Support the hunger strikers in Guantanamo Bay and Pelican Bay by direct solidarity *and* by opposing the rotten class society that has built this vast torture apparatus to protect itself! The implicit humanism underlying the struggles of prisoners must be made explicit as an organic part of a banner of revolution.

2. The August 5, 2011, report by Juan Mendez, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, also found that “any imposition of solitary confinement beyond 15 days constitutes torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, depending on the circumstances” and “should be subject to an absolute prohibition.” (<http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=A/66/268&Lang=E>)

Voice from Turkey

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That first day, there were about 25 mostly environmentalists; the following day, hundreds; in a few days, hundreds of thousands.

It became possible to talk about every topic that had been taboo. Not just about Kurds, or Armenians, but women. A man who came to the square with his wife started beating her, as was usual. He was stopped, somewhat violently, by others there. He could not understand: “This is my wife, I love her and I beat her! What’s it to you?”

THE LEAP IN HUMAN RELATIONS

Human relations in the square leaped ahead 20 years in those few days. No one can sell anything in the plaza. Any resources that come in—food, water, blankets—have to be shared. When the police attacked with gas and firepower, there are photographs of a Kurdish youth running hand-in-hand with a Turkish youth. This would have been unthinkable a couple months ago!

People living near the square put up signs in windows: “If you’re running from the police, my apartment is a safe haven, ring unit 6.” In makeshift clinics in local hotels, doctors have organized medical aid to those injured by police, since the police do not allow ambulances to transport the wounded and instead of taking them to hospitals, they detain and arrest the wounded. A general strike has been called for.

Of course we want democracy. But calls for abstract democracy do not challenge the system. That leads only to political solutions. Real change can come only through a people’s revolution. Democracy cannot be the goal, it can only be a step towards the changes we need.

—Activist from Turkey

Countering far-right racism in the UK

London, England—Suspected hate crimes against Muslims are on the increase following the killing of British soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich in May. Corporal Rigby was stabbed to death in the street by two men thought to be Islamic fundamentalists, prompting a resurgence of the British far right’s anti-Islam politics and violence nationwide.

“The vilification of Islam and Muslims is getting worse day by day,” said Fazilat Shivji in an interview with BBC news after witnessing an arson attack on Granby Mosque in Milton Keynes. “I think I am more scared now than at 9/11, which is surprising.”

Over 140 alleged hate crimes were reported via a government helpline in the two days following the murder of Corporal Rigby, at times prompting additional police deployments to protect “vulnerable targets” across London.

Organizations like the English Defence League (EDL) are attempting to capitalize on the Woolwich killing. “We have seen a sudden outpouring of racism and speedily-organised mobilizations by the EDL,” claimed an anonymous author on the blog “While Rome Burns.” “The death of Lee Rigby was a gift for the EDL,” claimed the blogger, “and they have not been slow to utilise it...to get in that window of opportunity while everyone’s feelings are still raw.”

The EDL has gained notoriety since its founding in

SHU hunger strike

Prisoners in California’s Security Housing Units (SHUs) gave prison officials almost two years to act on promises made during the massive peaceful hunger strikes to protest their indefinite placement in solitary confinement.

Their basic demand was that “gang validation,” as cause for placement in solitary indefinitely, be based on evidence of criminal gang activity, not on rumors, innuendos and guards’ opinions of material such as books, journals or art found in prisoners’ possessions.

The official response was a supposedly new “Strategic Threat Group” classification system, which the prisoners read as codifying the existing arbitrariness of the now renamed “strategic threat group” validation and vastly expanding the number of people who might get caught up in it.

The prisoners state: “The basis for our decision to resume our nonviolent peaceful protest has been made individually, while presented collectively, on behalf of ourselves, and all similarly situated prisoners, as well as non-prisoners, who are adversely affected by the inhumane policies/practices...”

“The undisputable fact is that many of us have been held in solitary confinement for the past 10 to 40 years based on fabricated information provided by prisoners who have been tortured to the point they provide false information to IGI (Internal Gang Investigation Unit), to get out of the SHU/Ad-Seg. Few of us, if any, have ever been formally charged with, or found guilty of, a single illegal, gang-related act.

“[B]ased on the CDCR’s (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation) failure to meaningfully address our Five Core Demands, we have no alternative avenues to obtain the long overdue changes, in a timely manner, other than giving the CDCR until July 8 to meet our demands.” The prisoners reaffirm their five core demands from 2011. (See <http://www.prisons.org/documents/FinalNoticewith5CoreDemands.doc>)

As examples of changes urgently needed: (a) SHU confinement shall be solely for determinate terms [no more indeterminate SHU terms!]; (b) Ad-Seg confinement...not to exceed 11 months, absent formal charges being filed; (c) Step Down Program shall be for a maximum duration of 18 months, and available to give prisoners an opportunity to shorten the duration of their determinate SHU term.

They ask that prisoners participating in the peaceful hunger strike not be retaliated against by guards and the system through write-ups, transfers, refusal of medical care, removal of their property, etc. They also ask that SHU prisoners be allowed access to programming, supplies, visiting, etc., which are available to others in administratively segregated units and are already included in the Department’s Operational Manual.

They conclude: “In addition...we came to realize that we here in Pelican Bay State Prison SHU were not the only ones who have been tortured with solitary confinement and countless deprivations for the past 10 to 40 years. That all our fellow men and women prisoners all across California, from all security levels 1 through 4 and across all of these United States, in both federal and state prisons, have suffered similarly to us here. But most have never had a voice or forum to lay out their demands for change.”

—The PBSP-SHU Short Corridor Representatives

The full statement is available at <http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/2013/02/14/peaceful-protest-to-resume-july-8th-2013-if-demands-are-not-met/#more-2219>

2009 due to violent demonstrations and political stunts intended to intimidate or directly harm opponents. Claiming to be a “a human rights organization” dedicated to “peacefully protesting against Islamic extremism,” EDL members have committed numerous acts of violence against individual Muslims, left-wing activists and police officers.

In one incident in Portsmouth in 2011, EDL members tried to circumvent a police cordon to attack anti-fascist activists with scaffolding poles looted from a nearby building site. Individual EDL members have given Nazi-style salutes in public, the latest on June 8 whilst gathering near a war memorial in Sheffield, despite the organization’s official line being one of anti-fascism.

“They claimed to be coming here peacefully,” said Sheffield Central Labour MP Paul Blomfield to the *Morning Star* newspaper, “but I am disgusted that they stood in front of the war memorial and gave a Nazi salute, then chanted obscenities at the police and towards Sheffield’s Muslim citizens.”

Some believe that much of the Left is unnecessarily worrying and that “Left-wing fantasists” are actually assisting the EDL publicity drive by panicking over the organization’s growth in activity. Patrick Hayes, in an article for the online magazine *Spiked Plus*, claimed that such fears are “unwittingly helping to bolster the knackered EDL.”

Hayes claimed that the struggling British National Party (BNP)—an openly racist organization that has recently suffered a serious of election defeats and publicity nightmares—would require “a very big resurgence” to “make new inroads” on the political scene. Talk of an “explosion in far-right hate” thus remains “squarely in the heads of scaremongering commentators.”

Despite the apparent political blunders of both the EDL and BNP—BNP leader Nick Griffin recently declared that the suspected killers of Corporal Rigby should be “wrapped in pigskin and shot again”—a potential resurgence in race hate and nationalism is still cause for concern.

Aside from an increasing number of aggressive demonstrations, EDL involvement in racially and religiously motivated attacks appears to be growing. Despite claims from the organization’s leader—former BNP member Paul Harris, who goes by the alias “Tommy Robinson”—to be innocent of any wrongdoing, EDL graffiti was found close to the site of a Somali community centre in Muswell Hill, London. The centre was torched on the morning of June 5 in what is being treated as a suspected arson attack.

“I think they (the EDL) are enjoying a resurgence,” said Ray McHale, a trade union activist and socialist from Cheshire, “Hopefully it will peak and drop off quite quickly, but this may depend on events. Obviously, the Lee Rigby murder has been a channel to allow a lot of below-the-surface racism to come out into the open.

“I think the main lesson I have learnt is that action to counter these groups needs to have a clear eye on how things are viewed by the wider public. If they intend to march through an area, especially with a high ethnic population, or to protest outside mosques, then counter-demonstrations are very important—emphasizing the unity of the community against them.”

—Dan Read

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

Moscow police arrested about 20 LGBT rights activists as they protested a proposed law, which has already passed Russia’s lower house, to ban gay “propaganda”—disseminating information about “non-traditional” sexual relations to minors. Human rights groups suspect that debate around the law is partly responsible for the recent murders of two men.

A rally in Cleveland, Ohio, for a 17-year-old Transgender woman of color, Cemia Dove, who was stabbed multiple times and found in a pond, protested police refusal to call her murder a hate crime. The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation/GLAAD and Transgender rights blogs have spoken out against media that misstated Ms. Dove’s gender.

Leaders of Israel’s Queer community declared that the killings of two Queer youths, Nir Katz and Liz Trubeshi, at a Tel Aviv LGBT center were hate crimes, despite police claiming the gunmen, who have been arrested, intended to kill someone else at the center for personal reasons.

Archaeologists in the Czech Republic have unearthed a 5,000-year-old Corded Ware skeleton, physically presenting as male but buried as was traditional for Corded Ware women: lying on the left side, head pointing to the east, and with an egg-shaped pot. Men were buried on their right sides, heads pointing west, with objects such as weapons and hammers.

Yemen’s Change Square

by Afrah Nasser

When Change Square in Sana’a became the focal point for Yemeni pro-democracy protests in 2011, one of the first posters to appear called the demonstrations there the “first step towards our civil state.”

It was remarkable to find such a poster in a country that has always been known for its socio-tribal form of power structure. But that was a period of hope. Change Square was transformed into a collective of tents housing hundreds of activists. Today, however, after two years, the square has been cleared.

Before 2011, the square was just a regular large traffic space in front of Yemen’s new Sana’a University campus. Change Square became a heavily politicized space. As independent revolutionaries progressively lost influence with the main political opposition, they



Children chant, “The people, it’s over, the regime has collapsed,” June 5, 2011, celebrating Saleh’s departure.

came to own the square. But as time went on, the independent change advocates could only watch as other more influential political powers hijacked the Square and, eventually, the uprising that it symbolized.

In April, after President Abdrabu Mansur Hadi’s decrees reshuffling the country’s military structure, the Change Square Organizing Committee—which is now affiliated with Yemen’s opposition alliance, the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP)—announced that protesters’ tents would be cleared and that the weekly Friday prayers would cease.

Some of the oldest tents in the square belonged to Yemen’s Muslim Brotherhood, to members of Al Islah political party, and to Nobel Peace Prize laureate Tawakkol Karman. She summoned reporters to a press conference at the end of April to declare that she was removing her tent and that she endorsed the whole move by the organizational committee.

Despite Ms. Karman’s stature, the dynamics of the change in Change Square are suspect. One of the square’s core activists, Rathwan Al Haimi, thinks that the decision to evacuate the square did not represent what the uprising stands for.

The decision was, he says, “a result of an accord between the First Armored Division and the JMP who long ago hijacked the revolution and transformed it into a mere political crisis. We independent young revolutionaries had no say on this whatsoever.”

Hani Al Junid, a socialist activist and journalist, explains how Al Islah attained dominance in the square: “They managed perfectly to get huge numbers of young people into the square and had an absolute grip of the square’s dynamics, thanks to their money.”

But then a new need emerged—to provide medical treatment to the hundreds who were injured in the 2011 protests against the new “consensus” government. That demand was met, after a fashion, but there were indications of corrupt distribution of aid. Dozens of protesters continued to suffer, with severe physical injuries untreated. Now the square is empty, and whatever momentum existed there has been dissipated.

Blogger and political activist Fatima Al Aghbri laments the evacuation of the square: “How can we say the revolution succeeded and simply abandon the square while there is so much to be done? They are killing the revolution slowly... Prisons are still full of political prisoners, wounded protesters have not all been treated, youth’s voice is still marginalized. Half of the current government consists of remnants of the old regime, and opposition parties have been assigned to rule and have allowed immunity to murderers.”

Change Square was the seed of Yemen’s uprising, and the momentum built up there was a driving influence behind the changes of the past two years. The scene in the square was extremely politicized and polarized, but it gave birth to a wonderful and outspoken political movement of people who are determined to continue the revolutionary work that they started.

“Just because the square was evacuated, that doesn’t mean we’ll quit our political activism. The revolution lies within us,” says Mr. Al Junid. —May 6, 2013

Used with permission from The National. Afrah Nasser is a freelance journalist from Yemen, based in Sweden since 2011. You can follow her at www.afrahnasser.blogspot.com.

Turkey, Syria and Iran at crossroads of world revolt

continued from p. 1

“A few weeks ago, things would have been different. The Kurds and Kemalists would have been fighting in the streets; the Gay men harassed or jeered, the Armenians trying to keep a low profile, and everyone would have been watching what they said—as afraid of each other as they are of the government. But in Gezi Park this weekend they are all here. The media calls it a carnival or a festival. But it’s much more organized than that—a funhouse reflection of a state.

“Together our protesters have created a miniature city within a city that reflects the dream of Martin Luther King Jr.—however ephemeral, however tenuous, however fast the army of police and marauders approach, people are *‘free at last.’* These disparate groups have built a Museum of the Revolution, pasting up pictures of the police attacks and resistance. They transformed the overturned and looted police cars into day-glo platforms of free speech. Everyone grabs a spray can and writes what they think. In a first for Turkey, they write it without fear or hesitation.”*

The echoes of Tahrir Square were as clear as they were unexpected. As the Arab Spring revolutions have come face to face with counter-revolution, many have written off the masses’ creativity and tenacity. But as we have seen since the first nights of embattled people fighting the Egyptian state for Tahrir Square, the masses have continuously risen to the challenges put to them.

BUT 2013 IS NOT 2011

Because 2013 is not 2010-11, however, the Turkish protests have to be seen in that new context. For one thing, the criticism of Erdogan’s AKP isn’t just a Turkish issue. In the wake of Arab Spring uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, the rulers hit upon the idea of a “moderate Islamism” patterned after the AKP, oriented to the interests of capitalism, as a way to contain the revolution. Thus the rebellion in Turkey is also a direct strike against this latest form of state-capitalist reaction. It goes hand in hand with the struggle against Morsi’s Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt, and the mass resistance to Ennahda in Tunisia that has escalated in the wake of Leftist Chokri Belaid’s assassination. Most directly, it can speak to the struggle being waged in the heart of Syria’s revolution against the attempt by various fundamentalist forces to redefine that broad-based, non-sectarian uprising in their own image.

This is where the clarification of ideas becomes vital. The attitude expressed by some Turkish protesters that Syria’s Assad is a defender of secularism is a deadly illusion. In fact, he has been the number one promoter of sectarianism in Syria. Further, he and Erdogan were close allies. It’s easy to find pictures of them embracing as warmly as Qaddafi, Mubarak and Ben Ali used to. Only after months of Assad’s brutality against peaceful protests, and 30,000 dead in Syria, did Erdogan denounce him.

In fact, it was *only* the continued resistance of the Syrian people that caused Erdogan to move.

IRAN’S ELECTION—REAL CHANGE?

By the same token, the Syrian revolution has had its effect on the presidential election in Iran. The stunning victory of Hassan Rouhani was a result of the Iranian people’s desire for peace, their understanding of the dangers of the threatened regional war. Iranians remember the horrors of the last great war between regional powers, the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, with over a million dead.

When Rouhani, in his election rhetoric, said things like, “We don’t want those who brought Iran to its knees to rule us again!” or “We must repair our relations with the world, first and foremost with our neighboring countries,” many heard an opening toward the freedom generations have struggled for since the betrayal of the 1979 revolution. There may be new approaches to the West over Iran’s nuclear program. However, Iran’s rulers—and despite his election rhetoric, Rouhani is one of them—have no intention of giving up their support for Assad. He is the genocidal heart of their own imperial project. The shabiha who murder Syrian civilians are often trained by Iranian military men.

Dissident union leader Mansour Osanloo pointed to the truer sentiments of Iran’s working people: “Just last week in Isfahan, during the funeral of the prominent dissident cleric Ayatollah Jalaledin Taheri, thousands chanted ‘Death to the dictator’ and ‘Political prisoners must be set free.’” (“Reading Marx in Tehran,” *New York Times*, 7-13-13.)

What is stunning to realize, in regard to Turkey, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Tunisia is that this is humanity’s collective effort to overcome the Religious Right ideology that grew up in Khomeini’s Iran, Begin’s Israel and Reagan’s America from the 1970s, as a world stage of counter-revolution.

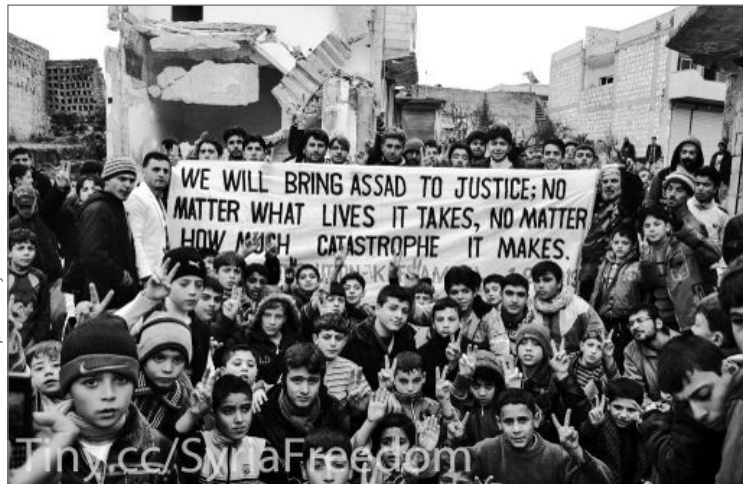
This ideology converged with a second stream of counter-revolution: the genocidal attack in Bosnia by Slobodan Milosevic and the Serb militias against the very idea of multiethnicity and coexistence. It is no accident that so much of Milosevic’s cheering section and

allied states—primarily Russia—flocked to Assad. It is one of history’s more brutal ironies that now finds the Iranian state on the same side, as an ally in genocide. So much for principle in the “Islamic Republic.”

CONTOURS OF A REGIONAL WAR

“What the workmen had to break down was not a more or less incomplete form of the governmental power of old society; it was that power itself in its ultimate and exhausting shape, the Empire. The direct opposite to the Empire was the Commune.” —Karl Marx

An arc of violence cuts from Lebanon—where Hezbollah has joined in the attacks on the Syrian people, giving the lie to their role as “resistance”—through Syria and into Iraq. There, an intensified terrorist campaign has sought to stir up sectarian hatred and takes



Revolutionary demonstration in Kafranbel, Syria, Feb. 1, 2013

the appearance of a regional conflict between Sunni and Shia. This is far from the truth.

In fact, what we are seeing is a fight between state powers being conducted in the name of the Shia and Sunni. As it expresses itself in Syria, it is an attempt to utterly destroy the original non-sectarian goal of freedom for all—a goal that was reiterated at thousands of mass demonstrations during the early months of the revolution, and is still expressed by the majority of revolutionary activists on the ground.

First the Al Qaeda-linked fundamentalists of Jabhat al-Nusra have been allowed to rampage over the Syrian landscape, not least against the more secular elements of the Free Syrian Army. In Aleppo, for example, the fundamentalists have forced many of the secular, working-class elements aside. The grassroots rebel groups can’t match the weapons al-Nusra obtains from international backers in the Gulf states.

Now, the Shia sectarians of Hezbollah, backed to the hilt by the Iranian state, have entered Syria on Assad’s side, helping to roll back some of the revolution’s territorial gains. Take al-Qusair, for example. Hezbollah fighters came to the fore in that battle as a sort of sectarian exclamation point following the massacres of hundreds of civilians by Assad forces at Baniyas and al-Bayda last month.

The intervention by Iran and its Hezbollah clients has led some to fantasize about an Assad “victory.” In fact it merely increases the likelihood of a Bosnia-style partition being forced upon Syria. As a student from Aleppo said, “There’s no going back on the revolution now. Everyone remembers the years of repression that followed Hafez al-Assad’s destruction of Hama in 1982. For years after that you were liable to be stopped at checkpoints, and if your name was on somebody’s list you would just disappear.”

IRAQI, LEBANESE SHADOWS

The people of Lebanon have their own long, terrible history of sectarian war and slaughter—Hafez al-Assad’s Syria was a prime player in that. In recent years the dynamic of Lebanese politics has revolved around the desire to be free both from Assad’s influence, which was partly achieved by the Cedar Revolution of 2005, and from the continuing presence of Hezbollah as an armed militia independent of the Lebanese state.

In this context, the Lebanese people have refused to be drawn back into civil war. Hezbollah lost credibility in its 2006 war with Israel, involving Lebanon in a war its people wanted no part of. Despite Israel’s “failure” in that war, Hezbollah hasn’t claimed credit for any more attacks on Israel—the border has been quiet.

The situation has echoes in Iraq, where Shia

mosques have been targeted for bombings by shadowy groups harking back to the worst of the “resistance” during the U.S. occupation. As before, these groups aren’t representative of the Iraqi people, but they are representative of the way the U.S. invaders understood Iraqi society and promoted narrow sectarianism. The Iraqi labor movement, women’s movement, youth and intellectuals that the U.S. oppressed or ignored were precursors to the Arab Spring.

NEED FOR REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS

At such a world-historic moment, the failure of theoreticians can presage an equally monumental disaster.

When *News & Letters* said two years ago that the revolutionary movement in Syria, in particular, was the anti-war movement, it was with this history in mind.

Syria has been the test of one’s attitude to revolution. Unfortunately, too many have failed that test—even the most basic questions, like the nature of imperialism as an expression of capitalism, have been thrown aside by elements of the Left.

Many of the reactionary players in the region operate under a hypocritical veneer of religion. It’s clear that the masses are aiming to throw that off. But that religious veil conceals the violence and authoritarianism that are inseparable from capitalism. Getting to the roots of counter-revolution and overcoming them require the total view of a philosophy of revolution.

That still means that only masses struggling for freedom can realize a new society. Further, their creativity and determination reveal that many paths to revolution remain

open: from the new human relations created in Tahrir Square to the Syrian masses who are now fighting both Assad and the fundamentalist face of counter-revolution.

What has been missing is a philosophy of freedom that can meet that creativity and help it continue to develop. That is the task history has assigned to our age and for which Marx’s philosophy of revolution in permanence is indispensable.

June 20, 2013

Brazil’s uprising

“We are not complaining about 20 cents, we complain about our stolen rights.”

What began as local protests against an increase in public transportation costs has grown—under the impact of vicious police attacks using tear gas, rubber bullets and batons—into massive protests in dozens of Brazilian cities with hundreds of thousands in the streets of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the largest demonstrations since protests against military rule in the 1980s. As we go to press, some 300,000 people took to the streets of Rio de Janeiro and hundreds of thousands more flooded other cities.

A “Free Fare Movement” that had organized against fare increases has now taken root across the country with demands and questions about Brazilian society and, in particular, about the ruling Workers Party government: Why will some \$26 billion of public money be spent on the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics, while spending on housing, health care and education is frightfully lacking? Why did politicians arrogantly dismiss the protests, refusing to consider rolling back the fare increase until almost two weeks of protests overwhelmed them? Why do teachers have barely livable salaries while the politicians draw tens of thousands each month on top of wholesale corruption?

While a small increase in bus fare seemed like an unlikely spark for the protest, in truth the millions of *paulistanos* who earn minimum wage end up putting out some 25% of their monthly salary on a couple of bus rides a day, traveling two or more hours to work and back, on overcrowded, inefficient buses.

While unemployment is low in comparison to other South American countries, the inequality of life and labor is huge. Millions have been lifted out of extreme poverty in recent times, due to Brazil’s galloping capitalist development managed by the Workers Party (WP) leadership, but the reality of poverty and racism remains. Thus, Brazil has a huge number of domestic workers—6.5 million. Some 60% are Black and 90% are female. They get very few benefits, work unlimited hours and can be fired on a whim, though a recent law promises improvements if it is enforced.

A decade of Workers Party rule, first under Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and now under Dilma Rousseff, has yielded contradictory results: lifting millions out of extreme poverty through anti-poverty programs, but leaving the capitalist structure completely intact. Far from instituting a socialist program, the WP has sought to and often succeeded in co-opting the powerful social movements that brought it to power. The question of the moment is whether this new stage of mass protest will signal a revival of social movements independent of the “progressive” government, and thus open a pathway of social transformation from below.

—Eugene Walker, June 20, 2013

* From *Istanbul and Beyond*: <http://istanbulgibbs.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/where-is-all-this-going-week-in-silivri.html>

NEWS & LETTERS

VOL.58/NO. 4

JULY-AUGUST 2013

News & Letters (ISSN 0028-8969) is published bi-monthly. Subscriptions are \$5 a year (bulk order of 5 or more, 25c each) from News & Letters, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Telephone 312-431-8242, Fax 312-431-8252. Periodical postage paid at Chicago, Illinois. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to News & Letters, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Articles may be reprinted verbatim if credited to "News & Letters."

Raya Dunayevskaya

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News & Letters is printed in a union shop.

News & Letters is indexed by Alternative Press Index.

ALLIED PRINTERS

TRADE UNION COUNCIL

TAMPCO PRESS

CHICAGO, IL

457

School’s out! Where’s my next job?

East Bay Area, Calif.—I am a public school teacher in California. The students’ last day was Thursday and mine was Friday. People may imagine that teachers here hit the beach or kick up their heels poolside, sipping cocktails and working on a suntan. What is closer to the truth is that the first week or two is needed as a recovery period from a job that far exceeds 40 hours a week and regularly requires our labor during the envied off-periods of winter and spring breaks. For me and many other teachers, though, Monday will be the kickoff to the summer routine of registering for unemployment benefits and looking for work, as, once again, a year’s contract has come to an end.

Teachers are one of the last unionized groups of laborers in the U.S. What that means is sometimes hard to qualitatively differentiate from not being represented.

In the 13 years I have worked as a California public school teacher, I have signed contracts that read: “I understand that I can be released for any reason and no reason.” Teachers, on the other hand, are not allowed to break their contracts. If we do, the district will go after our credentials. Twice I have been hired in November, once in February. Districts save money by dragging their feet on hiring a “permanent,” as opposed to substitute, teacher. The “permanent” teacher, if it is someone who has just been hired, is actually only a temporary employee who, like me, will be out of work come the end of the school year. Where teachers are itinerant and so

precariously employed, our children are cheated with understaffed schools, disrupted instruction, and unstable learning communities.

None of the above touches on actual working conditions. Class sizes, the myriad needs of students, and no limit to the number of preps (the different courses a teacher is assigned), are harrowing and not in the interest of students. Districts take a bottom-line approach to education, when it comes to students. It’s all the neurosis of capitalism.

Teachers are coached to sell their subject matter. Administrators are treated as CEO’s, receiving cushy salaries and being just about unaccountable for waste, incompetence, and out and out wrongdoing.

Many students and their families see education as a transaction, rather than a process. Where I’ve worked in poor communities, this attitude engenders a regard for education both as irrelevant and as a foreign imposition. What value, read as monetary value, does going to school have? The answer: None. There are no jobs. Where I’ve worked in affluent communities the attitude engenders a regard for education as an entitlement. The question here is a demand: Where are our A’s and positive comments in the remarks columns?! And serve it up with a smile and any way we like, just like at Starbucks.

Revolution cannot come soon enough. Marx should be on everyone’s summer reading list.

—California public school teacher

Devil’s Tango, *nuclear energy’s dance with death*

During the year following the Great Catastrophe in Fukushima Daiichi on March 11, 2011, Cecile Pineda wrote *Devil’s Tango: How I Learned to Do the Fukushima Step by Step*. She weaves together voices from 70 years of nuclear experiments and explosions, adding her love of the earth, its people and its landscapes, confronting the mystery of humans who exploit and destroy our home.

Chicago teacher speaks

A high school teacher, member of the Chicago Teachers’ Union (CTU), spoke at the Left Forum about the 2012 strike. Below we print excerpts of her talk.

Two years before the strike we elected union leadership from CORE (Coalition of Rank-and-file Educators). They immediately cut their own salaries and created an organizing department and a research department in the union. The research department marshaled facts for our side, and we published “The Schools Our Students Deserve.” We distributed it widely because it clearly described what we are **for**, and it helped parents and teachers know it too. We want to save our schools but make them better. We showed the educational apartheid within the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). CORE organized around school closings, taught younger members how to be delegates and supported the parents.

During those two years we constantly prepared. In May, 6,000 of us marched and disrupted traffic in Chicago’s Loop, a sea of red T-shirts. We got a lot of public support.

We held mock strike votes. At my school, once people didn’t feel alone and had something to vote for, 119 out of 120 teachers voted. The cafeteria workers, who are not even part of our union, marched down to the mock voting location and said “We authorize you to strike!”

Once the proposed contract was published, 100% of the teachers at my school and many others, met with each other and read every word of that contract—this had never happened before. We all knew the contract, including its shortcomings; like not adequately protecting support staff.

The new contract calls for a Professional Problems Committee in every school, made up of the school delegate [union representative] and elected members. It reports to the membership and meets with the administration to solve problems before they become grievances. In my school it has been union democracy in our day-to-day life.

We still face more testing, a new evaluation system, a longer school day and the closing of 54 schools, mostly in poor and working-class neighborhoods. Our funding has changed to per-pupil instead of being position-based, which results in about a 20% cut, so we expect layoffs. Parents, teachers and students have organized to save their schools. We had a three-day march which wound through the city in support of student organizing. CPS holds “parent hearings” on schools targeted for closing. It’s ridiculous that we have to grovel before these hearing officers! Some of the premier special needs schools were on the list simply because of their location.

Nevertheless, the membership trusts the CORE leadership. We have changed the national debate on testing and school closings. It’s not over—there could be occupations.

These 130 vignette-like pieces are each a work of art on the feelings, facts, tangential events, villains and angels connected to the Great Calamity. To the nuclear in-crowd, many of the world’s people are not human in the same sense as they regard themselves. Scientists and politicians to this day escape responsibility for filling air, land and water with radioactive isotopes.

Pineda’s artistry interweaves modern, urban Tokyo with the Bashkirs and Tartars who were devastated by the unreported and minimally evacuated nuclear explosion at Kyshtym in 1957.* And before them was the crew of the Lucky Dragon 5, one of whom died from radiation sickness in 1954 when the U.S. tried out a thermonuclear weapon in Eniwetok. And before them were the Marshall Islanders, who sickened and died from fallout when the U.S. tested weapons of mass destruction in 1946-48.

Pineda brings forth voices from 1986 Chernobyl, echoed and reinforced by 2011 Fukushima. She points out that all beings live in a fallout world. Pineda connects the Arab Spring to Occupy and to the U.S.’s out-of-control corporations. Climate change, genetic modification of food organisms, fracking, depleted uranium (DU) in bullet casings and tank bodies, nuclear disasters and non-medical use of radioactive or fissionable isotopes are of a piece. It all comes down to “sacrificable” zones and people, the guinea pigs who don’t know they are experimental animals.

One sacrificable zone was in the Nevada desert when the U.S. was testing nuclear bombs. I lost friends who were “downwinders.” There were rumors of whole flocks and herds of mysteriously dead animals in my 1950s Intermountain home. One rancher said, “Have you ever seen a young animal that was born completely rotten? I did... Have you ever seen a young animal that ... didn’t have one speck of wool on their bodies? They were transparent and you could see their little heart a-beating until they died. I never seen anything like that from the time I was a little boy...” (p. 111).

A downwind father lamented: “When my boy was born ... his face was a massive hole and they had to put all these pieces of his face back together. I could see down his throat, everything was turned inside out and it was horrible. I wanted to die. I wanted him to die... I remember going outside the hospital, laying on the grass and just crying and sobbing over it” (p. 111).

The sacrificable zones are no longer isolated. The entire Northern Hemisphere is being impacted by this cataclysm. It is painful to watch corporations and states try to “take charge” of a situation way beyond their ken—a situation generated by neglect, exacerbated by secrecy, heightened by greed, and aggravated by fear of the 99%.

The winds and tides will visit the injuries of Kyshtym, Chernobyl, Three Mile Island, Fukushima, Iraq’s DU, etc. on the Southern Hemisphere just as in the 1940s and 1950s global processes brought outcomes from nuclear testing in the “remote” North Pacific to us.

The culture that pursues nuclear weapons of mass destruction is the same culture demanding taxpayer money to fund and insure nuclear power plants which routinely exude radioactive isotopes and produce fissionable material suitable for bombs.

—January

* The 1960 U-2 incident of the cold war was a reconnaissance mission trying to photograph Kyshtym. The USSR declassified the accident at the same time as it opened up information about Chernobyl in 1989.

Peoples’ Board of Ed

New York—In early May, over 25 parents, teachers, retired teachers and community activists gathered to plan a campaign to restore control of our schools to the communities where they are located. Mayoral control of education is due to end in 2015 and the Coalition for Public Education (CPE) is mobilizing for a “Peoples’ Board of Education.”

Since Mayor Bloomberg was given total control over



Participants in a rally of the Coalition for Public Education.

the schools by the New York State Legislature in 2002, he has waged a ruthless campaign of shutting down schools in poor and working-class neighborhoods by: promoting elitist charter schools within existing school buildings; selling off schools and school property; using attrition to reduce the number of Black and Latino teachers; bringing in poorly trained “Teach for America” teachers, 65% of whom are white. Furthermore, he has “corporatized” the entire educational system with outside companies who push “Teaching to the Test” and a general right-wing offensive against public education. More and more their model seems to be New Orleans post-Katrina where public schools have been reopened as charters and over 75% of students attend charters.

Educational segregation in New York City is class- and race-based. It begins even before kindergarten. Parents are anxious to see that their children are in the so-called “Gifted and Talented” (G&T) schools, and companies charge \$1,500 for test prep for kindergarten level G&T schools. The test prep fee for the more exclusive high schools can be as high as \$2,500.

The more money you have, the better chance your child has of being put in a high academic fast track, while the children of the bottom 90% are relegated to public schools that produce illiterates with diplomas, only prepared to work at some fast food joint, deal drugs, or die in an overseas war.

The CPE wants to change all that. They are calling for an end to mayoral control of education, a position that not one Democratic Party candidate for Mayor has endorsed. Every candidate stands for the continuation of Bloomberg’s failed policies.

How can we say failed? Because, after over a decade of his “reforms,” the dropout rates are abysmally high. Many graduates are still not prepared to enter college or university. When confronted with this reality, the Bloomberg Education Department introduced even tougher 3rd and 8th grade evaluation tests whose stated goal is to promote a select few to higher education and careers in a deteriorating capitalist economy.

The CPE wants a “human rights based” public education system that challenges students. Community control means having an alternative vision of education, education as human liberation. The CPE has vowed to be present at the mayoral debates and hold the candidates’ feet to the fire until they agree to end more than a decade of educational mismanagement.

—Michael Gilbert

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WORLD VIEW

by Eugene Walker

Rana Plaza, the building that collapsed in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on April 24, killing 1,127 workers—most of them young women—was constructed illegally. Bribes were paid to obtain building permits, and additional floors were added without permission.

The day before it collapsed, workers on the third floor heard an explosion caused by the building starting to crack and rushed outside. An engineer brought to the factory was horrified by the cracks and said the building should be abandoned. But the owner insisted that work continue.

Some may wish to call that event a horrendous accident. Bangladeshi garment workers—who have been protesting for years against slave wages, bosses cheating them out of hours worked, and abysmal working conditions—know that more was involved. Factory collapses like this, and murderous fires in other garment factories like one last November that killed 137 workers, recur with alarming regularity.

Tentacles of responsibility stretch far: to the building and garment factory owners; to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association,



Premeditated murder in Bangladesh

which complains about nationwide strikes known as hartals but does nothing about working conditions and wages; to the Bangladesh government and their “safety” inspectors who give factories and companies a pass time and time again; to the overseas companies like Tommy Hilfiger, Gap, Calvin Klein and H&M.

Then there are the mass retailers including Target and Wal-Mart who proclaim the need for workers’ safety, yet do not insist on better conditions and salaries for the hundreds of thousands of workers in these death-trap sweatshops.

For all these parties, it is the bottom line that is the determinant—and thus the call for production and more production under horrid, unsafe working conditions and the cheapest salaries globally.

The stakes are high. The Bangladeshi garment industry, the second largest after China, is a \$19 billion

prize and is the country’s major income earner. There are 5,000 garment factories employing 4.5 million workers, the vast majority of them women. The wages paid are the lowest in the world—\$37 a month—up from \$21 after huge worker protests.

Worker resistance, a growing power, has been met with intimidation, strike-breaking, and outright murder of union organizers and activists. Unions, previously prohibited, are allowed now only on a limited basis; worker associations are allowed, but only in individual factories.

The Industrial Police, a new government law enforcement agency, was created in response to the growing labor militancy of strikes and mass demonstrations. It collects intelligence and prevents labor actions. The government set up a Crisis Management Cell to watch over the garment sector. The main domestic spying agency, the National Security Intelligence Agency, spends time repressing union organizing and worker solidarity efforts.

It is easy to show negligence and affix blame to this or that individual. But the greater truth lies within a system that is based on the most production at the lowest cost, with workers’ lives—and deaths—regarded as only one more cost of production.

Labor in China

- At least 120 workers died at the Jilin Baoyuan-feng Poultry Plant in Mishazi, near the city of Dehui in northeast China. Many could not escape ammonia fumes and a raging fire, because doors were locked to prevent workers from leaving the plant or “stealing.” In recent years a Communist Party official had called the factory “inspiring” for its production methods. Other officials gave the plant a “leading enterprise” label for its innovation in processing chickens.

- A system of “re-education through labor” penal colonies such as the Masanjia camp, is in operation where those who do not fit in—critics of the government, religious offenders such as adherents of Falun Gong, and “petty criminals”—are given sentences of up to four years without trial. Their prison labor is used to produce goods sold abroad as well as uniforms for the army. “Re-education classes” consist of reciting prison rules and singing patriotic songs.

- In the next dozen years some 250 million peasants will be pushed off the land and herded into new cities and towns, forced to become urban workers. The government, often without any consultation, is buying up the land and knocking down rural villages. As *The New York Times* noted on June 15, “Over the past decades, the Communist Party has flip-flopped on peasants’ rights to use land: giving small plots to farm during 1950s land reform, collectivizing a few years later, restoring rights at the start of the reform era and now trying to obliterate small landholders.” Are we entering a new phase of Mao’s “Great Leap Forward”?

Mugabe's Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe’s wannabe President-for-life Robert Mugabe had called for quick elections on July 31 to preempt new rules for the media and election procedures in an attempt to continue his rule after more than three decades in power. Refusing to yield after the last fraudulent election, this time he got Zimbabwe’s highest court to agree to elections in just six weeks. Under pressure from regional African leaders he has now agreed to ask for a two-week delay, still leaving no time for full implementation of safeguards and reforming the police and army, who contributed greatly to the violence that accompanied the last election.

Latin America in view

Bolivia’s Statism—The government of Evo Morales and Garcia Linera, while using anti-neoliberal words, and proclaiming themselves anti-capitalist and for socialism, are in fact practicing a state form of capitalism. Most recently they have acted against miners, teachers and healthcare workers who demonstrated for decent pensions for retiring workers. Earlier, the government attempted to force the building of a road through the lowlands of Bolivia against the wishes of the Indigenous peoples living there. A fierce resistance forced the project to be put on hold. This “Andean-Amazonian type of capitalism,” to use the words of Vice President Garcia Linera, substitutes the wishes and demands of the state for the self-activity of Indigenous workers and peasants.

Guatemala’s Genocide Trial in Disarray—Efraín Ríos Montt, the dictator who, as commander of the armed forces in the early 1980s, directed a civil war against all the Mayan Ixil people, was found guilty of genocide. But in a stunning reversal, the Guatemalan court declared the final part of the trial illegal, leaving the verdict in disarray. How matters will now proceed is unknown. Through the testimony of the Ixil people the bloody hand of Ríos Montt was decisively revealed. The U.S. under Ronald Reagan gave full cover to these horrendous events in the name of fighting “Communism.”

Honduras coup anniversary—This June marks the fourth anniversary of the military coup that toppled elected President Manuel Zelaya, which was then followed by the fraudulent presidential election of Porfirio Lobo. An ongoing resistance has faced politically motivated murders of resistance activists by the military and police and private armies employed by the largest landowners. Those killed include peasant cooperative leaders, lawyers and journalists as well as unionists, teachers, and LGBTQ activists.

Greece: workers’ TV

Without a word of warning, the right-wing coalition government of Antonis Samaras decided to close down ERT, the Greek Public Radio and Television Network, and lay off its 2,700 workers. Three TV channels and four radio stations that broadcast countrywide, paid for by the Greek people, were shut down overnight. On the morning of June 12, Greece woke up without a public TV channel or public radio, while 2,700 ERT workers woke up unemployed.

Resistance was immediate. The fired workers occupied the station’s headquarters in Athens and have



Day three of workers’ takeover of ERT

kept broadcasting through live-streaming. That makes ERT a public television network under workers’ control. Faced not only with the ERT worker resistance, but massive demonstrations by labor unions, the government claimed they would restart a “lean” public network soon.

These newest cutbacks were dictated by the European financial czars, who are demanding more and more cuts and austerity on the backs of the Greek citizens. This is occurring in a country with a 27% unemployment rate and with 62% of youth without work. All of Europe remains in Depression precisely because of the reactionary policies of its governments and their financial “wizards.”

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

News & Letters was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcat strikes against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signaled a new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. *News & Letters* was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910–1987), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, became Chairwoman of the

National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907–83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker’s Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya’s works, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* (1958), *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973), and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women’s Liberation, and Marx’s Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx’s Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa.

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels. In light of the crises of our nuclearly armed world, it becomes imperative not only to reject what is, but

to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery of Marx’s Marxism in its original form as a new Humanism and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as Marxist-Humanism. This is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*.

Dunayevskaya’s philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya’s original 1953 philosophic breakthrough

and her final 1987 Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party “to lead.” We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our *Constitution* states: “It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor.” We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking. Send for a copy of the *Constitution* of News and Letters Committees.

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

“Human power is its own end”—Karl Marx

Vol. 58 No. 5

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2013

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EDITORIAL *Egypt at deadly crossroads*

“The revolution was not launched in the name of an Islamic State, or a military state. Our revolution was launched in the name of freedom and social dignity and social justice....

—Mona Eltahawy

The horrific events taking place in Egypt today show the dead end of all alternatives to revolution. The military, led by Deputy Prime Minister General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, has been all too happy to retake power and impose capitalist “stability” once again. They have declared a State of Emergency and month-long curfew.

Slaughtering over a 1,000 and injuring many more, the military fired automatic weapons into mostly unarmed crowds, aiming for the head and chest, and positioned deadly snipers throughout cities. The confrontations between the military and the Muslim Brotherhood have become a series of massacres.

No place is safe from the army, the police, and vigilante bands. They have attacked mosques, hospitals and morgues. The number imprisoned is unknown. Leftists and reporters have been taken as well as members of the Brotherhood.

NOT MORSI OR THE MILITARY

The outcry in Egypt would be greater but the Brotherhood, hated by most of the public, has emphasized its own reactionary nature through sectarian attacks on Coptic churches, and promotion of self-destructive acts by its followers. Both sides represent different faces of counter-revolution, but at this point only one is well armed.

In contrast, the mass demonstrations that forced the removal of President Mohamed Morsi on July 3

continued on p. 11

WORKSHOPTALKS

Suicide as revolt

by Htun Lin

Workers at the vast Foxconn manufacturing complex in China now struggle against daily torture that is not only physical but mental. A new technocratic ruling class purveys a bland, calm, Big Brother demeanor as the face of a daily torturous war on workers.

It is a new form of the banality of evil that combines Dickensian work conditions, crowded dormitories and a vast bureaucratic maze designed to make young individuals feel totally lost and alone when thrust into it by circumstances not of their own making.

This is what comes across in a research paper by Jenny Chan (*The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 11, Issue 31, Aug. 12, 2013). Chan presents 17-year-old Tian Yu’s account of her desperate path leading to a suicide attempt after 37 days of employment at Foxconn which left her paralyzed from the waist down from three spinal fractures.

HELL, THY NAME IS FOXCONN

Tian tells of the 12-hour-day drudgery with a single day off every second week, working under extreme Taylorism where repetitive tasks are timed to the second, prolonged exposure to screens causes intense eye pain, unpaid compulsory work meetings are held every day, and omni-present company slogans harangue: “Value efficiency every minute, every second” and “Achieve goals or the sun will no longer rise.” Speed-up pits workers against each other. Shifts are constantly rotated and dormitories are randomly assigned so that workers cannot build bonds of friendship.

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

Racism and the fight against it take center stage in the U.S.

by Franklin Dmitryev

Nationwide protests erupted immediately after the outrageous July 13 acquittal of George Zimmerman for murdering 17-year-old African-American high school student Trayvon Martin last year. Within three days, thousands of protesters came out in dozens of cities, and a new group called the Dream Defenders began a 31-day occupation of Florida Gov. Rick Scott’s office.

The Dream Defenders are young women and men, mostly Black and Latino/a, including some undocumented immigrants. They aim to “fight the criminalization of our generation by directly confronting the sources, sponsors and supporters of it.” Their immediate demand is for Florida to pass the Trayvon Martin Act, to ban racial profiling, end the school-to-prison pipeline, and repeal the Stand Your Ground pro-vigilante law.

The demonstrations—which were still erupting three weeks after the verdict—and sit-ins, conversations on the streets and on social media, have in common a multiplicity of demands and a burning desire for basic changes to this violent, racist society. (See page 11 for in-person reports from various cities.)

‘POST-RACIAL SOCIETY’ A LIE

Martin’s murder and Zimmerman’s trial exposed how deeply racist U.S. society remains. This “civilization” indicted itself and its pretense to be post-racial, which is sanctimoniously trumpeted by its legal system, from the hallowed heights of the Supreme Court down to the police officer harassing people on the streets of Harlem.

As a self-appointed gun-toting neighborhood watch volunteer in Sanford, Fla., Zimmerman singled out Martin because he was a young Black man. Against police advice, he followed Martin, and ended up killing the teenager with a bullet to the chest. After barely investigating, police released Zimmerman without charge.

When demonstrations and coast-to-coast outrage forced Gov. Scott to bring in a special prosecutor, he chose Angela Corey, a political veteran who made a show of charging the killer—and then threw the case.

She failed to use evidence of Zimmerman’s pattern of racial profiling but did not challenge the defense’s



Photo by Jim Kiernan

Constance Malcolm, the mother of police murder victim Ramarley Graham, demonstrates for justice that she has yet to find. On Aug. 8, a second grand jury ruled not to re-indict Officer Richard Haste, who fatally shot the unarmed Graham. She is continuing her fight.

racist use of crimes by other Black men to sway the jury. She failed to use a peremptory challenge to remove Juror B-37, an obvious racist who called the peaceful demonstrations in Sanford after Martin’s death “riots.”

Judge Debra Nelson forbade the prosecution to mention racial profiling or to call on a voice expert to testify that it was Martin heard calling for help during

a 911 call, but allowed the defense to use evidence that Martin had a small amount of marijuana in his system.

Juror B-29—the sole person of color on the jury—put it simply enough: “George Zimmerman got away with murder.”

RACISM REIGNS IN COURT AND OUT

Under the legal system’s monstrous fiction of colorblindness, jurors are not supposed to consider realities such

as documented racial bias in how “stand your ground” laws are used. Nationally, whites who kill Blacks are far more likely to be given a free pass under these laws. In Florida, 73% of people who killed Blacks receive immunity, as against 59% of those who killed whites. Recent cases illustrate this unequal justice:

- Marissa Alexander, an African-American woman in Jacksonville, Fla., who fired a warning shot into the ceiling after being threatened by her husband, hurt no one but was sentenced to 20 years in prison last year. It was Angela Corey who threw the book at her despite Alexander’s husband’s testimony corroborating her story. The judge would not allow a “stand your ground” defense.

- Two weeks after Zimmerman’s acquittal, 46-year-old white man Michael Dunn asked a carful of Black teenagers in Jacksonville to turn their music down. Shortly afterwards, he opened fire on the unarmed teens, killing 17-year-old Jordan Davis, then drove off. He now claims self-defense.

- In Winter Springs, Fla., Owen Eugene Whitlock, a 62-year-old white man, shot and killed his daughter’s boyfriend, Jose Ramirez, in 2009. Ramirez had angrily told Whitlock that he would not be disrespected and was slowly walking toward him with fists raised. No charges were filed.

The vast majority of killings with impunity are perpetrated by police. Almost one African American is

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News & Letters banned in Pelican Bay

Editor’s note: Days after California prisoners started a hunger strike at two-thirds of the state’s prisons, News & Letters subscribers at Pelican Bay State Prison were notified that the July-August issue had been banned. Here are two of their letters:

7-14-13

I recently received a disapproval form stating *News & Letters*’ July-August 2013 issue was censored here at Pelican Bay. The form states the reason is that on page 9 there is an article on the Pelican Bay hunger strike and goes on to cite “plans to disrupt the facility” being in violation of prison rules.

I read this nonsense and asked a comrade on the tier, “They don’t want us to know there’s a hunger strike going on?” (It should be noted today marks the 7th day we are on hunger strike.) These weak excuses for censorship are amongst the issues that brought us to strike in the first place.

What we prisoners are demanding is of course to put an end to torture, but what must be identified is that prisoners have consciously acted as a class with class interests.

The call that was issued by Pelican Bay SHU prisoners to end hostilities validated this leap in consciousness amongst prisoners. So our current struggle goes far beyond simple cosmetic changes, i.e., color pencils, or even natural rights like access to sunlight.

What we are up against is the unvarnished essence of living in a capitalist society, a class struggle between the prison class *vs.* the ruling class.

I cannot fathom ending my hunger strike anytime soon; this torture has gone on far too long and will not continue. We will stop these torturous conditions!

We draw strength from knowing that *News & Letters* delivered such a powerful article in favor of those of us tortured that the state felt the need to censor your work. Power to the people!

—Pelican Bay SHU prisoner

* * *

July 14, 2013

On July 8, 2013, another hunger strike was launched here inside the security housing unit (SHU) in an ongoing effort to try to bring an end to the injustice

continued on p. 8

WOMAN & REASON

Fascisms test women

The Child Catchers

by Terry Moon

No one has better reason to despise the Muslim Brotherhood than the women in Egypt who put their lives on the line to throw out former President Mubarak and experienced the new human relations that reigned for 18 days in Tahrir Square.

President Morsi’s constitution gutted women’s rights and put them under religious control. The Brotherhood blamed the life-threatening and orchestrated rapes in Tahrir Square on the victims, stating that women were “100%” responsible for them. It was clear from the beginning of his reign that the Brotherhood and Morsi were opposed to women’s freedom and self-development.

Clearly, it was not only feminists who wanted Morsi and the Brotherhood out of power, as massive demonstrations showed. The military knew they were making a popular move when they arrested Morsi and accomplished their coup. (See Editorial, page 1.)

But now, over 1,000 Brotherhood members and supporters are dead in the streets—and a good many of the dead are women. The army imposed a state of emergency; military-sanctioned thugs control the streets.

THE ARMY IS NOT OUR FRIEND

The hopeful and hopelessly naive expression that “The army and the people are one hand,” is fatally contradicted by what the army did to revolutionaries before Morsi took power: the brutal beating of the woman protester who became known as the woman in the blue bra; the painful and demeaning so-called “virginity tests” cruelly administered by the military to punish women protesters; and continuing gang rapes that often include cuttings and beatings. These well-planned and executed gang rapes could not continue were it not for implicit—if not explicit—approval of the military.

But even more, that naïve expression is contradicted by what the military is doing now. It is crucial that those who fought for revolution speak out against General Sisi and his army of thugs. One who is making herself heard is Egyptian feminist writer and activist Mona Eltahawy. This is what she said in part to Joy-Ann Reid on MSNBC on Aug. 18 speaking from Cairo:

WE PICK FREEDOM

For the past 60 years we’ve been forced to chose between these two binaries, neither of which are friends to freedom or the revolution. Again, I condemn all killing and the bloodletting must stop....We had to make this false choice last summer when the elections were the military junta guy and the Muslim Brotherhood guy, but now what we’re seeing, it’s playing out on our TV screens, it’s playing out on our streets, horrifically....

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

In Turkey, demonstrations were held against an Islamist fundamentalist religious commentator who asserted that it was shameful for pregnant women to be seen on the streets or on TV. Protesters from all walks of life included pregnant women and their husbands and both women and men feigning pregnancy. Demonstrators considered the remarks to be evidence of creeping fundamentalism under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s ruling Justice and Development Party.

* * *

In May, a report that 99.3% of women in Egypt had experienced some form of sexual violence while only 19% reported it to the police, was published by the UN Entity for Gender Equity. One of several feminist groups responding to this increase in violence, Operation Anti-Sexual Harassment, stated, “These attacks aim to exclude women from public life and punish them for participating in political activism and demonstrations.”

* * *

California Governor Jerry Brown, due to “philosophical” reasons and unknown long-term health risks, vetoed legislation that would have allowed women to sell their eggs for medical research. Health concerns were echoed by the non-profit Center for Genetics and Society, which is in favor of contraception and abortion rights. However, Assemblywoman Susan Bonilla (D-Concord) stated, “There’s a deeper level in his veto statement that questions the ability of a woman to engage in informed consent and assess the risks for herself of this procedure.” But “informed consent” is only possible when all the facts are available, something the in-vitro fertilization industry has refused to do.

* * *

Rather than allowing women to drive and move about freely by themselves, or educating men to stop harassing them, Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, will spend billions by 2019 for a metro “public” transportation system that will create segregated compartments for women and children. The all-female Princess Nora bin Abdulrahman University will also soon get its own rail line so no one on the street will have to view a female university student.

As a woman and as a feminist, I refuse this binary. Because you have to remember that General Sisi, he was in charge, he justified the so-called virginity tests when Egyptian female revolutionaries were sexually assaulted when Tahrir Square was cleared. And when Morsi was president, many of his supporters and members of the Muslim Brotherhood were completely silent and blamed women for sexual assaults. Neither of these sides are friends to women’s rights. They are authoritarian and they understand each other’s language, which is a language of fascism, fascists with god and fascists with guns, and they negotiate in blood....

Too many people are so willing to write us off. They don’t think we deserve freedom. We deserve to be free and Egyptians will be free. But we need to stumble and we need to learn and we need to push the fascists aside and say you will not derail our path to freedom. And you will not continue to define Egypt, because Egypt is all of us. Egypt is the military and the Muslim Brotherhood but we won’t allow their fascism and their negotiating in blood to derail our path to freedom.

My message to the U.S. administration is: Catch up with us because for too long you thought we were just plodding along loving this strong-fisted leader. My message to General Sisi is: We will not allow another Hosni Mubarak and we won’t allow a military junta to ruin our aspirations to become free. We deserve to be free.

REVOLUTION IN PERMANENCE

I think what will happen once people realize that we’re paying too high a price in blood is that we will remember what this revolution is about....Now Egyptians from all levels and all backgrounds understand, have seen a revolution begin. It’s not finished, but they’ve seen it begin, and they understand that our world counts and has real world consequences.

For Egyptian women to experience freedom, the revolution has to continue. For that to happen, the revolutionaries have to oppose both Morsi and Sisi’s blood-thirsty military and fight for the vision of a new society that sustained them in Tahrir Square.

Rise Up Texas

photo by @leahmarie0304

New York City—

An overflow crowd at Bluestockings Bookstore heard Hallie Boas speak on “Come and Take It: How the Fight to Protect Women’s Healthcare Is Launching a New Wave of Feminism in Texas.” Boas told the crowd that “Rise Up Texas” was born as a consequence of the battles for freedom in the Middle East against fanatical religious fundamentalism, which is also behind the

Rise Up Texas and others demonstrate on July 1 at the Texas State Capitol.

new anti-abortion law in Texas.

The group was galvanized by the historic 13-hour filibuster in June by state legislator Wendy Davis. Boas said her group invited 50 people to a planning meeting and over 150 showed up. They realized that people of color, who would be hit hardest by the draconian new laws, were not represented. So Rise Up Texas began to recruit where Latino and Black populations are concentrated and built a strong multinational coalition.

Rise Up Texas coordinated some of the strongest opposition in the recent battle over the passage of draconian anti-woman bills in the Texas legislature.

They organized General Assemblies where all people were invited to speak and share in decision-making and then the divided into working and affinity groups.

There were repeated marches and rallies at the State Capitol. People—young, old, white, Black, Latino/a, men and women—joined together and created such a commotion that one Right-wing lawmaker described the group as a “riotous mob using Occupy Wall Street tactics.”

Once the new draconian laws were passed, 35 of 42 women’s healthcare centers closed leaving only seven places in Texas where women could have abortions. The law also banned abortions after 20 weeks. In protest dozens of women dressed in black, stood in silence in the State Capitol holding signs that said simply, “Shame.”

Boas credited the growth of Rise Up Texas to its efforts in poor and working-class neighborhoods and in educating people on what the impact of these laws would be on the people of Texas. She said that they consciously framed the issue in terms of the broad attack these laws made on the healthcare of all Texans.

—Michael G.

The Child Catchers

The Child Catchers: Rescue, Trafficking, and the New Gospel of Adoption by Kathryn Joyce, 2013.

Kathryn Joyce explores the religious Right’s renewed enthusiasm for domestic and international adoption. This craze had several predecessors dating back to the 1800s, in which various denominations of Christianity became interested in adopting babies or youth of different ethnic groups including Jews and Catholics, Native Americans, Koreans, and Jamaicans. The purpose was always to convert them to Christianity and save them from a life of poverty and crime. The bad influences on the children included their supposedly “backward” countries of origin or ethnic groups as well as their own families, even though the children were all portrayed as orphans.

Today’s adoption movement is similar. It uses non-existent crises to make the Christian Right appear socially conscious while propping up its ideology and harming the people it is trying to help. Joyce examines several countries that experienced adoption “sending” booms, including Haiti, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Rwanda, and Liberia.

CREATING NONEXISTENT CRISES

The Christian religious Right promotes the notion that there is a global crisis of millions of children orphaned by disasters and disease when, in reality, the children usually have family members to care for them. More often, religious Right adoption workers con parents into permanently giving up their children by exploiting a misunderstanding caused by cultural differences. Parents think their children will be educated in an affluent country and returned to them. They are devastated when they learn the truth. Some Americans, fanatically believing they are doing God’s will, start adoption agencies and attempt to kidnap children from developing countries without following any legal process.

This overemphasis on international adoption usually causes problems in the children’s adjustment to their well-meaning adoptive families. The most harrowing stories were of Liberian children exposed to the trauma of war and hunger and adopted by Quiverfull families (see “Ideological babies,” Oct.-Nov. 2009 *N&L*).

This is the most extreme branch of the religious Right which emphasizes having and adopting as many children as possible. Psychology experts agree that these children do not respond well to the Right-wing notion that love equals obedience, nor to abusive methods of punishment such as beating and food deprivation.

SINGLE MOTHER STIGMA IS INTERNATIONAL

Joyce also discusses the damage caused by the religious Right’s use of domestic adoption to appear compassionate about abortion. She interviews Anne Fessler, author of *The Girls Who Went Away: The Hidden History of Women Who Surrendered Children for Adoption in the Decades Before Roe v. Wade* about the “Baby Scoop Era” of the 1950s and 60s. Young, single women were sent to maternity homes and pressured to surrender their babies for adoption. She tells the more recent story of a woman tricked into a closed adoption (having no contact with the child) in the modern equivalent of these homes. She examines how Korean women have been pressured into international adoption because the social attitudes in that country towards single mothers are similar to those of our “Baby Scoop Era.”

Joyce says that corruption has led to the shutting down of many adoption programs in large “sending” countries. However, these may be replaced by the international adoption of special needs children and children from smaller countries not falling under the Hague agreement regulating adoption. She does notice a positive change. A feminist movement in Korea is changing attitudes about single mothers. A new focus supported by Christian organizations, even some fundamentalist ones, is alleviating poverty by funding community education programs and emphasizing helping poor parents keep their children, helping orphans find relatives, and intra-country adoptions. There is a new realization that citizens of developing countries need allies in solving their problems. For this to succeed, the adoption movement’s supposed goal of social justice will have to overcome its fundamentalist goal of conversion and nationalism.

—Adele

NEWS & LETTERS

VOL.58/NO. 5 **SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2013**

News & Letters (ISSN 0028-8969) is published bi-monthly. Subscriptions are \$5 a year (bulk order of 5 or more, 25c each) from *News & Letters*, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Telephone 312-431-8242. Fax 312-431-8252. Periodical postage paid at Chicago, Illinois. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *News & Letters*, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Articles may be reprinted verbatim if credited to “*News & Letters*.”

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News & Letters is printed in a union shop.  **457**

News & Letters is indexed by Alternative Press Index.

BART workers face union-busters

Oakland, Calif.—On Aug. 5 several hundred rallied in support of Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) workers from Service Employees SEIU Local 1021 and Amalgamated Transportation Union Local 1555. Transit workers have been trying to negotiate a contract with a modest raise and no more takeaways. Four years ago they submitted to a wage and hiring freeze.

Every day 400,000 people ride BART to work. BART has a \$125 million surplus and is offering minuscule wage increases, which would be eaten up by increased employee pension and healthcare contributions. Workers making \$52,000 a year in the high-cost Bay Area would actually lose \$1,900 in net take-home pay after four years.

A four-day strike in early July crippled the daily commute and, according to a local business council, meant \$73 million a day in lost productivity. The strike set off a frenzy of media vilification of BART workers for causing the discomfort, but most workers aren't fooled.

Rather than directly negotiate with workers, BART directors spent \$399,000 to contract out their negotiating to a union-busting transit manager, Thomas Hock. Hock's intransigence has provoked seven transit strikes since 2005. His company, Veolia, has been successfully sued for maintaining a discriminatory hostile environment for minority workers.

After getting nowhere with Hock, BART workers decided to resume their strike. Governor Jerry Brown ordered BART workers back to work for 60 days. Workers are not optimistic that BART will be any more willing to negotiate. Workers from International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 came to declare their support, as did many others. Whatever is negotiated, the rank and file have yet to have their say.

The 1,600 bus drivers, clericals, and mechanics in Alameda County who work for AC Transit just rejected by two to one a concessionary contract negotiated by ATU Local 192. It was the kind of contract offer unions at BART are hoping to get, even though it introduced a \$180 monthly healthcare premium over three years. Now, more than ever, it is time for workers to find new ways to stand together in capital's continuing war on labor.

—BART rider and strike supporter

Walmart workers rally



Walmart store and warehouse workers, with the support of several busloads of national NOW conference participants, rallied at the downtown Chicago Walmart store on July 5. Workers demanded better wages, an end to discrimination against women and people of color, and an end to harassment and retaliation against workers trying to organize.

Chile re-interers miners

The world watched transfixed three years ago when 33 Chilean gold and copper miners were entombed by a roof collapse for 69 days 2,300 feet underground. The fate of the miners was unknown until a drill broke through near where the miners were trapped, and the miners said that all had survived.

Rescue specialists decided to drill another hole big enough to rescue the miners. A special video camera allowed the world to see the final rescue. Government officials vowed to take steps to make sure that something like this would never happen again—the same speech heard after every disaster.

A special government commission determined that the roof collapse could have been avoided if safety procedures had been followed, and that the mine owners were responsible. The mine had been cited by Chile's mining authority for many safety violations resulting in deaths and injuries to miners, and had been ordered closed until the safety violations were corrected. However, the mine owners reopened the mine, and two weeks later the roof collapsed.

Despite this overwhelming evidence against the owners, at the most recent court hearing the judge heard prosecutors blame the state mining authority and mine owners, while mine owners blamed the prosecutors, the mining authority and the miners themselves. Then the judge ruled, unbelievably, that no one was responsible! Upon hearing the judge's decision, one surviving miner let out a string of curses and declared of Chile's court system, "What else can we expect."

Clearly, justice was not served for the Chilean miners and their families.

—Andy Phillips

A view after Marikana

South Africa—What have we learned from the Marikana massacre of South African mine workers? Firstly there are limits to trade unionism. One union will struggle for dominance over other unions in the workplace, but whether that struggle is about the rights of workers or the privileges of shaft/shop stewards and the union bureaucracy is another matter.

We have seen positive signs of worker self-organization. We have also seen a crisis of representation, where workers and communities are beginning to say that they do not need the mediation of others and can speak, organize and act for themselves.

Then, apart from the deep-seated divisions among the Left (essentially because the Left hides its intellectual laziness behind ideological divisions dating back to the Russian Revolution and its activist laziness by grandstanding in university corridors), the Left waits for explosions in the working class, which its various factions then attempt to hijack.

There is no substitute for grinding door-to-door hard work in working-class communities, and this does not imply preaching the divisions of the Russian Revolution. It implies understanding the challenges facing the working class, understanding immediate, intermediate and long-term struggles of the working class where they live and work, and building solidarity and unity of purpose and struggle within and between communities, within and between workplaces, and rebuilding the self-confidence and consciousness of workers as workers and as members of working-class communities. There are no instant "microwave popcorn revolutions."

—David van Wyk

NYC fast food strikes

New York—They walked off the job in Brooklyn. They struck in Manhattan. They marched in Queens and in the Bronx. Yes, the fast food workers of New York, along with those in seven other cities, are on the move and demanding nothing less than to be treated as human beings on the job, not replaceable parts in a giant fast food industry machine.

In New York City several hundred walked off the job, and there were marches from different points around the city organized by the New York based "Communities for Change" along with local unions. The strikers in Brooklyn began at six in the morning and marched from one fast food restaurant to another across the borough, finally arriving at Manhattan's historic Union Square.

There, people holding strike signs filled the upper part of the square. A woman who worked for Kentucky Fried Chicken in Brooklyn told me of her working conditions: "Horrible. The bosses abuse us and I don't make enough to survive."

A Latino bakery worker said he had worked in the fast food industry and was there to show solidarity with the strikers. A woman who worked at Burger King told me that she and her partner were abused by their bosses, receiving minimum wages and no benefits. Her partner said there was no air-conditioning in the food prep area, and they only had a floor fan to blow hot air around, providing no relief for the workers.

As the rally grew in size, people began chanting, "We can't survive on \$7.25," the New York and U.S. minimum wage, and "What do we want? Justice!" The struggle shows no signs of abating. On July 29, hundreds dared their bosses to fire them for striking. Soon there will be thousands. One day, as an organizer told me, "We'll shut the whole system down!"

—Michael Gilbert

Goodwill sweatshops

Chicago—Dozens of people gathered outside a Goodwill resale store on Racine in Chicago on July 26 to demonstrate against Goodwill Industries' hiring disabled workers at steeply sub-minimum wages. Disabled Americans Want Work NOW called the action on the 23rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Activists shouted, "Goodwill is bad will" and "Sub-minimum wages are outrageous," getting support from passing truck drivers. They handed out leaflets to shoppers explaining how Goodwill used a legal loophole to pay disabled workers as little as pennies an hour. Those in wheelchairs were among the most forceful voices on the picket line, which got the attention of store management. After a delegation of picketers, including those in wheelchairs, went inside to deliver a letter, a Goodwill official came outside to speak to the picketers.

She stated her particular store employed nobody at sub-minimum wages and that no stores in the Illinois franchise of Goodwill Industries were hiring disabled workers under the 14 (c) loophole in the Fair Labor Standards Act. Picketers continued to question her, demanding that she answer their letter promptly, and pressure Goodwill Industries branches using 14 (c) certificates, which steal wages from disabled employees.

Demonstrations across the country have called out Goodwill for staffing what are called sheltered shops with disabled workers paid as little as 22 cents an hour. Highly paid national executives have defended their shameful policy, and threatened to fire disabled workers if labor and disabled activists are able to close that loophole in labor law.

—Bob McGuire

WORKSHOPTALKS

continued from p. 1

Chan identifies a pattern of these youthful suicides all sharing a connection to the assembly line torture: "Thousands of miles from the shelves of Apple Stores, and ordinarily concealed from consumer concern, lies the reality of alienating toil, that in extreme conditions, contributes to individual tragedies such as Tian's."

As Chan asserts, "The Foxconn suicide cluster represents a phenomenon that has no precedent in China's industrial history." Tian's story, pre- and post-employment, is what tens of millions of China's rural migrant youth are experiencing as Chinese enterprise zones become the world's workshop.

SMILE AS WE WORK YOU TO DEATH

Company aphorisms and daily affirmations are meant to motivate, placate, and prod these young workers' minds. In the midst of a cluster of suicides, Foxconn expects workers to smile and exchange niceties when spoken to.

Workers in my own shop know about this kind of manipulation. Like at Foxconn we face a plethora of happy talk "wise aphorisms" that have no relation to reality and are plastered all over the workshop: hullabaloo about "teamwork," "world class healthcare," "excellent customer service" and "best practices."

We are lectured daily about meeting quotas. The whole place feels like a factory assembly line filled with line supervisors who treat us like robots, because they themselves have been transformed into robots.

A co-worker on the graveyard shift is now struggling, working alone with a workflow designed for three. She was actually called into the office for disciplinary action the other day, where, unbeknownst to her, a shop steward was already chosen for her.

The "problem" was that she wasn't smiling enough and that she was clocking in "two minutes" too early everyday, which "costs the company in overtime." She simply sat there motionless, expressionless, firm and resolute, and said to the tribunal calmly: "I have nothing to smile about, I believe smiling is optional."

CAPITALISM ISOLATES WORKERS

We share Tian Yu's indignation which pushed her over the edge. We are lectured about "teamwork," but isolated at our individual workstations to sink or swim on our own. Under capitalism we are isolated from each other. But more than ever, its globalization of production has made all of us more connected and dependent on each other than ever.

Commodities and capital are able to cross any borders in unfettered movement, while the human beings who produce them are tied to their assembly line. As Marx described, it is a world in which things have social relations, while humans relate through things.

This kind of dehumanized isolation leads to an abyss where some of us see the only way out as suicide. The only way out of this morass is through the conscious cooperation amongst ourselves. The only way to fight back is to recognize our shared social existence and extinguish isolated individualism. We have to be daring enough not just to look down into the abyss, but to look into each other's eyes.



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FROM THE WRITINGS OF

RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: Because of the crises besetting the city of Detroit, we present Dunayevskaya's editorial from the August-September 1967 issue of News & Letters. The "law and order" imposed then echoes stridently today, not only locally but nationally. Over the past five decades, the primary determinant in Detroit's hidden history is the revolutionary depth of its July 1967 rebellion along with the reaction against it.

"Abolish the slums!" was so clearly and loudly the demand of the Negro Revolt in every single part of the country—North, South, East, West—that even President Johnson couldn't pretend not to have heard it. In words, the President even claimed that that was part of his "war on poverty." Hadn't he asked for rat control, and hadn't Congress denied him even that piddling sum?

The trouble with that fairy tale is this: where, as President, he must plead with the people and thus is double-tongued, as Commander-in-Chief he need not plead. He orders, and his orders were clear and unequivocal:

1) Shoot first; the questions can wait for later. It is true that by then some people will have become corpses, but "law and order" will have been restored.

2) Shoot at anything that moves; if that turns out to be only a cigarette light, and the innocent victims are men, women, and children, still "law and order" has been restored.

3) Shoot up a whole building if a sniper is suspected anywhere. It is true that by then not only will fear have been thrown into the beleaguered ghettos, but it will also have encouraged self-styled "patriots" to take the law into their own lawless hands. But thus will terror rule, and "law and order" prevail.

The crackle of a federal tank, under orders; the barrel of a racist cop's revolver, not under orders and lacking a search warrant; the barrel of a National Guardsman's machine gun, under orders, but gone wild—all these combined to "restore law and order" in Detroit this July 28.

"Law and order" meant 43 lay dead; some 1,500 were wounded; 4,000 were jailed with such impossible sums of bail demanded (up to \$100,000!) that constitutional rights were nullified.

Though no "foreign invaders" had landed anywhere in the United States; though no insurrection against the state—"constituted authority"—was in progress; though only one side was thrice armed, the city was, to all intents and purposes, under occupation. "Emergency measures" turned out to be a pseudonym for martial law.

THE HUMAN SIDE

What did happen was the burning down of the Black slums. What Detroit Negroes attacked was white property, not "whitey," as such. On that score, both appropriations and sniping were bi-racial. As distinguished from other revolts—and that was the **new** stage of black revolt—what happened in the shops was **solidarity of white and Black labor, with the have-nots, and against the have-it-alls.**

To try to deny this, to make the revolt appear purely racist, the power structure—from Democratic Vice-President Humphrey to Republican Governor Romney, plus the liberal Establishment—have had to quote Stokely Carmichael. He, however, was in Havana; the action was in Detroit. He was talking, not acting. **Those who were the actual participants in the revolt made their actions stark and clear: Down with the Black slums. Let's not have two nations, one filthy rich and the other miserably poor. Let's have one nation with totally different, truly human relationships.**

To the extent to which, as against the Negro masses, the elitist Black nationalists did operate in the ghettos, whether that was in Cambridge (Md.) or Detroit, in Wichita or Elgin (Ill.), in Newark or Milwaukee, they were just trying to get credit for that which the masses themselves did, did spontaneously. They revolted against the **class system wearing a white face** rather than against "whitey" where he was not part of the exploitative system.

The simple truth is that it is the Government—national, state, city and farm; the police, the prisons, and the courts—and not the "outside agitators"—which breed racism and evoke the wrath of the people. Outside of this reality, and the unvarying tale of police brutality, **the greatest breeder of racism**



Downtown Detroit on July 23, 1967.

Detroit 1967: 'Law and order' from the barrel of a gun

is Congress, rushing headlong into multiple investigations, not of the criminal system which produces racism, but of its victims.

THE CRIME OF THE CONGRESS, WITH AN ASSIST FROM THE PRESIDENT

Even before the outbursts from the Black urban ghettos reached their climax in Detroit, the Senate tried to rush through the anti-riot bill, already approved by the House. It may still do so, and write *finis* to the most elementary democratic right of travel by making it illegal to cross state lines (state lines **within** these allegedly united 50 states) "to incite to riot." The people who "rioted," however, were not brought in across state lines. The rebellions were not only indigenous to the state, the city, but to the very limited slum area to which they had been restricted all their lives. **This is precisely what they rebelled against, the ghettoization.**

So far removed are the members of Congress not only from the ghettos, but from the lives of the

overwhelming majority, from life itself outside of the Congressional corridors, their own plush homes and those of their "business friends," that the competition was on in Congress for discovering "conspiracies," "un-American" ones; rackets, "crimes" and guns, American ones, and, of course, "outside agitators."

Allegedly it was to stop this asinine and vindictive search and turn attention to the real "socio-economic reasons" of revolt in the cities, that the President established his own special "Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders." **The lie was given to that one when the first "witness" was none other than J. Edgar Hoover, he who got his lawless spurs in the infamous Palmer raids back in the 1920s in the first post-world war hysteria; he who has long since become a law unto himself as FBI chief; he who, this very year, found "conspiracies" and "subversives" even in staid civil rights organizations and in the "New Left."**

In any case, it didn't stop the hearings by the Judiciary Committee headed by the arch-reactionary racist, Senator Eastland of Mississippi, and the creation of a sub-committee to be headed by that "rackets buster" racist Senator McClellan of Arkansas. Or the red-baiting House Un-American Activities Committee Subcommittee headed by that other racist, Willis of Louisiana. Even that paragon of virtue who misappropriated all those political contributions for private use, Senator Dodd of Connecticut, who has a drive of sorts on for a gun control bill, got in on the act.

And all that is but the beginning. Wait till all the "reports" are in, new reactionary legislation passed, further "training in riot control" "practiced"—then watch how bourgeois democracy has gone the totalitarian way and prepared for World War III **simultaneously with putting down "civil disorders."** "Law and order" from the barrel of a gun, and from the legislative hopper, will coalesce to give reality to the nightmarish mirage of fascist totalitarianism.

What can stop this horror from realizing itself?

WHO WILL DO IT?

Today the vitality of the Negro people, full of purpose, has attacked only the symptoms of oppression—the white landlord in the slums, the white merchant, the white middleman.

This is not because they do not know who Mr. Big is. Rather, it is because they do not see white labor ready to join them in their determination to undermine the whole system. They know better than the elitist leaders that, without white labor, the system cannot be torn up by its roots.

The urgency of the times demands that white labor, **not** as a sometime thing, **not** as the exception, solidarize itself with Black labor. In that way, and in that way alone, can blind revolt become social revolution.

The Black masses have already laid the groundwork for this, and shown themselves in the vanguard in these crucial ways.

In 1956, with the Montgomery Bus Boycott, their **self-organization** showed itself in every phase of their activities—from the daily mass meetings to the organization of their own transportation.

By 1960, when the sit-downs at lunch counters initiated the Negro Revolution in a way recognized by white youth as well, a new force was born: a whole new generation of revolutionaries, white as well as Black.

The following year, with the Freedom Rides, we witnessed a third force for revolution, "Womanpower, Unlimited."

These three forces—workers, youth, women—coalesced in the urban revolts which reached their climax in Detroit **because** here, for the first time in years, outside and inside the shop, there was the first appearance of white and Black solidarity. It is but the faintest of beginnings. But it did appear.

The dialectics of liberation will assure, with no matter what false relapses and deflection by racism, its forward movement toward ending Black slums and brilliantly white imperialism, Black poverty and white profiteering, **exploitation of Black and white. Only then will the social revolution unfold itself and not just against the middleman, but against the system itself, and its moral decay.**

R.D.

Detroit defends homes

Detroit—Detroit Eviction Defense came out of the Direct Action Workgroup of Occupy Detroit about two years ago. We work with people who want to save their homes. We have saved about 60 so far. The group is sometimes sidetracked by asking for help from politicians who don't come through, and that is what the homeowners see. Now some of them are coming back to the group to help others.

We did a two-month vigil this year. From 6 AM to 6 PM, people came out to the home. A third party had bought the house and wouldn't sell it back to the owner, but then was willing to deal. A dumpster had been placed at one home but we were able to stave off the bailiffs and fill it with leaves. We have had campaigns in Southwest Detroit where we march on the banks and leaflet the neighborhood, informing residents that one of their neighbors' homes is threatened with foreclosure. We pack court hearings.

We want to pull people in, so that they see others thinking creatively and begin to talk to each other about how to make their block safer.

Now we are looking at tax foreclosures, because although we have saved mortgages, the properties can still be foreclosed for back taxes. Very few people know that the state of Michigan has the Step Forward Program, which funds tax payments for qualified owners.

Metro Property Management refused to sell a woman's home back to her. She had owned it for 36 years and fell behind because of cancer. Instead they offered to rent it to her for \$1,000 a month! After our demonstrations, they not only sold it back, but asked us to stop giving them bad publicity!

They want to turn Detroit into a city of renters: the developers buy up huge numbers of houses, sell the properties overseas and then get paid to manage them, in addition to collecting rent. Huge profits are involved.

Detroit Eviction Defense is small but growing; we have had good support from the United Auto Workers union's social justice committee and Local 600, yet we remain an independent group.

What we do spreads; you cannot build a free society in a capitalist system but we can start re-envisioning. It is way past time for humanist values. People can learn to trust themselves by doing. It's very powerful. Independent organizing has been key to our work. Self-organization, mutual aid, solidarity and respect are keeping us moving forward.

Detroit Eviction Defense meets Thursdays at 6 PM at St. John's Church, 2120 Russell St. (www.detroit-evictiondefense.org)

—Miriam Pickens

American Civilization

on Trial: Black

Masses as Vanguard

by Raya Dunayevskaya

Used in the Freedom Schools of Mississippi in the 1960s, it powerfully presents U.S. history from the vantage point of liberation struggles, showing Black masses in motion as the vanguard at historic turning points in the country's development. Use it in your own freedom school today!

See page 7 for ordering information.

ESSAY

New biographies reflect Karl Marx's todayness

by Gerry Emmett

As the philosopher of revolution in permanence, Karl Marx has a particular relevance to our time. Recent events—like the economic crisis that became acute in 2008, the upheavals of the Arab Spring, the prisoner strikes, and the occupations movements—all testify to the *value of* and the *need for* such a philosophic view. That is so because the goal is human freedom.

Moments when the idea of freedom spreads worldwide are something like the appearances of a great comet. If you're lucky it comes around once in your lifetime.

But it doesn't come from out of the cold depths of space; rather it comes from the very heart of humanity and unfreezes social relations. Suddenly the impossible becomes eminently possible, the seemingly unthinkable becomes a new language, and the formerly "hopeless" become activists and thinkers.

The historic scope of such moments clearly reach beyond the limits of any one individual's life. Marxist-Humanists understand the most important biography is thus "the biography of an idea," the inner life and logic of the Idea of Freedom.

"It is philosophy and not philosopher; and if that philosophy is revolutionary and if that Idea is the Idea of Freedom, then a New Humanism will first arise. Then the end will result in the Self-Bringing Forth of Liberty," as Raya Dunayevskaya put it.*

MARX IN TWO RECENT VERSIONS

Nevertheless we can learn a lot from the way Karl Marx is presented in contemporary biographies, even if the particular writer has his/her own ax to grind. This is certainly the case with the two recent widely reviewed works, *Love and Capital: Karl and Jenny Marx and the Birth of a Revolution*, by Mary Gabriel (2011); and *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth Century Life*, by Jonathan Sperber (2013).

Both books cover the basic outline of Marx's life from his birth in Trier, Prussia, in 1818 to his death in London in 1883. Sperber's book (through his appearance on *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart) might be considered the closest thing to a pop culture biography of Marx. "He loved being somebody the bourgeoisie was afraid of," Sperber told Stewart, a snarky comment that does capture the spirit of his book: Marx as minor ce-

* "The Power of Abstraction," in *The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx*, Dunayevskaya (2002), 309.

Recreating Detroit

Detroit—"Democracy shall live—it shall not die!" This call-and-response closed out the Aug. 17 People's Forum where 200 social justice activists came together as D-REM (Detroiters Resisting Emergency Management). The Forum was but one of thousands of ongoing actions and conversations about the new status of Detroit under Emergency Manager (EM) Kevyn Orr, who was appointed by Republican Governor Rick Snyder in March.

Orr was appointed late in 2012 after voters, statewide, had rejected an earlier emergency manager law. The Chapter 9 bankruptcy petition Orr filed in July is being contested in court to determine if Orr negotiated in good faith with the city's creditors (over 100,000 because every investor and retired employee may be owed money). Everything is on the table—city employee contracts, health plans and retiree pensions, as well as all tangible city assets. Orr as EM is paying Christie's auction house \$200,000 to appraise the Detroit Institute of Arts collection estimated at several billion dollars, one of the largest public art collections in the U.S.

Mainstream media images of Detroit today are entirely dystopian: a wasted landscape of vacant weed-choked lots with piles of rubble and garbage, decrepit drug houses, empty shopping strips dominated by cartoon-figure stereotypical Black male criminals armed and terrorizing. It's no longer the Motor City but Grand Theft Auto. Even *The New York Times* writes as if there are no people here other than criminals and young, white artists and urban homesteaders who bring culture and sanity to a cowed, faceless population. Our small downtown is portrayed as gratefully awaiting rescue by benevolent capitalists and corporations: the Illitch family sports team owners, Quicken Loans, Compuware, and the three casino gambling palaces.

Little attention is given to the historic and economic context. In the 1950s, freeways were deliberately built across neighborhood lines to ensure that none would become powerful enough to challenge the city's political structure. The most blatant example was the otherwise inexplicable routing of I-75 along Hastings

continued on p. 9

lebrity, to be remembered for his quirks, if not actually *as* a quirk of history.

Sperber, who has previously written a history of the 1848 European revolutions, works hard to limit the relevance of Marx's ideas to the span of his mortal life. He claims that Marx's work was essentially finished between 1850 and 1870, and that "The results of his theoretical deliberations are frustrating to interpret...Marx's writings after 1850 on philosophy, society and history were fragmentary: snippets of journalism or suggestions from correspondence, relevant passages in political polemics, or economics treatises...he never produced an extensive theoretical work, which has led commentators to focus their attention on his 1840s manuscripts..." (387-388).



Jenny von Westphalen Marx, whose contributions are underappreciated

Obviously, this leaves Marx's *Capital* (1867) as the elephant in the room. Of this philosophic, theoretic and political masterwork Sperber writes that, "as anyone who has ever picked it up knows [it is] lengthy and dense." It is an "intellectual labyrinth," "fragmentary and overwhelming."

While this is ludicrous on its face, Sperber is making a point. Because he disregards Marx as the philosopher of permanent revolution—the determinant of *Capital's* structure—he needs to adopt another understanding of Marx's project. He finds this in some very old post-Marx Marxist ideas.

TOUTING CELEBRITY; CONTEMPT FOR IDEAS

Thus he describes Marx's intellectual development after 1850 as an attempt to reconcile an early Hegelianism with positivism and "empirical science." He even claims that "dialectics disappears" from Marx's later writings. Again, ignoring the achievement of *Capital* and its dialectical structure, he writes that "Marx toyed with the idea of writing a treatise on dialectics...This treatise was intended to 'shake off' the 'mystical form' in Hegel's version, and might have addressed the question of the compatibility of Hegelian thought with the positivist intellectual priority for the natural sciences" (398). Early revisionist Eduard Bernstein would have recognized this argument.

When he finally does take up *Capital*, Sperber reads it in light of the "Marx" he's created. So even the section in Chapter 1 of *Capital* on the fetishism of commodities is presented by Sperber as another conflict between Hegelianism and positivism—minus the revolutionary proletariat, which, as the embodiment of permanent revolution, transcends the fetishism and opens the way to freedom.

This falsification—and there's no other word for it—is extended to cover Marx's late writings, like the *Ethnological Notebooks* and his letter to Vera Zasulich, also: "[Marx] perceived the British experience as the initial example of a universal process of capitalist development that other countries would have to emulate."

To the contrary, Marx decides in his last decade that the accumulation of capital is only the universal in capitalism, but not a universal of world development—non-capitalist countries might experience other forms of development, in conjunction with revolutions in the capitalist countries. Again, for Sperber the Paris Communes isn't important because of its impact on the structure of *Capital* or the real movement toward transcending capitalism, but for making Marx a European celebrity.

By insisting on limiting Marx to "his" time, Sperber is driven both to falsify Marx's real ideas and to ignore the real history of Marxism. This would begin with the debates on imperialism that followed in the next generation of revolutionary thinkers like V.I. Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg.

These debates took up Marx's views of the tendency of the falling rate of profit, on "primitive" accumulation, and so forth. They were profoundly informed by Marx's *Capital*, and were actually debates over its *meaning*. The real issue was the recreation of a philosophy of history that could illuminate the new paths to revolution and freedom that a new generation was aiming for.

It is simply not true that Marxism found its continuity in an adaptation to positivism. Rather, it was found in Lenin's return to study Hegel's dialectic after the collapse of the Second International in World War I. By 1953 Dunayevskaya had articulated this self-development of the Idea of Freedom as Marx recreating Hegel's Absolute Mind as both a New Humanism and as revolution in permanence.

Sperber is not as dishonest in his coverage of Marx's personal life. He gives him some credit for making the best life choices available to a man of his time and class background. But this only underlines why Mary Gabriel's less "theoretical" book is also so much more interesting.

THE MARX FAMILY DRAMA

Gabriel's book is, as its title suggests, actually a study of the whole extended Marx family, both Karl and Jenny and their surviving children, Jenny, Laura and Eleanor, the unacknowledged son, Freddy, their housekeeper Helene Demuth, and Friedrich Engels.

Her biography is thus something like a period novel, like *The Forsyte Saga* or *Buddenbrooks*. Like one of those old novels it even has an extended list of characters to keep everybody straight. But instead of the history of a family's fortunes, or its rise and fall in the capitalist order of things, it is the history of a family defining itself in opposition to capitalism, and in relation to revolution.

Gabriel's inspiration for writing came from the simple fact that there wasn't another book that quite told that story. She describes both the great strength and weakness of her book: "What I found was that every aspect of Marx's philosophy, every nuance of his words, had been dissected, and that scores of Marx biographies had been written from every possible political perspective, but that in English there was not one book that told the full story of the Marx family" (p. lv). In fact, Marx's philosophy and work continue to reveal new "nuances." She has little to say about that.

What is most fascinating here are the family details, particularly regarding the Marx women. Unfortunately, there isn't a lot new on Jenny Marx herself—she does inspire respect for having renounced her class position for the life of a revolutionary. The daughters, though, come across much more vividly.

With them comes a profound sense of tragedy. Both young Jenny and Laura married French revolutionary exiles who struggled to make their livings in England. Jenny died early in 1882 of cancer; Eleanor committed suicide in 1897, betrayed by Edward Aveling, her scoundrel husband and a translator of *Capital* into English; Laura died along with her husband, Paul Lafargue, in a double suicide in 1911.

Likewise there is Freddy's tragedy. He was the unacknowledged son of Marx by Helene Demuth, Marx's housekeeper, who was also a committed revolutionary. His paternity was covered up (and claimed by Engels) in an effort to spare Jenny Marx's feelings. Though he survived longest of all the children, until 1929, he was never sure of his father's identity. This isn't a story of snark and celebrity, but of the deep human cost involved in trying to live out one's convictions, and sometimes failing—as humans will often do.

ELEANOR MARX, AN ORIGINAL

In a sense, Eleanor Marx comes across as the true heroine of the book. As an original character she actually embodies everything that would become great in English Marxism. She was deeply committed to Irish freedom from an early age, for example. She was also a pioneering feminist, as translator of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*; as an actress in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*; as a close friend of South African feminist writer Olive Schreiner.

Eleanor was connected to the Bohemianism of the time, as a friend of William Morris and George Bernard Shaw. She was also one of the first intellectuals to grasp what it meant to go lower and deeper into the proletariat. She supported the dockers' strike of 1889 and organized among the destitute of London's East End. She wrote a description of the brutal conditions there: "The district was mean and cramped. The houses were squat and seemed even more so because of the factory chimneys that towered over them, spewing filth and ash. Did the sun rise? Did it set? It wasn't evident in Whitechapel, Bethnal Green, and Limehouse" (p. 543). She would not have shrank from today's Homs or Cairo, Pelican Bay or Juarez.

Eleanor's life remains exemplary in these aspects. Mary Gabriel allows us to see how the Marx family affected her development. By suggestion, she does more, too. It is clear that as Marx was researching the development of the family, of patriarchy, he was also living out its contemporary expression in a way that must have informed his researches. Behind the researches of Marx's late *Ethnological Notebooks* there stands a great, unspoken drama of conscience that we have barely begun to understand.

Indeed, the continuities and discontinuities of history compel continual returns to examine the path here. Hegel, Marx, and Dunayevskaya will continue to illuminate our steps.



Eleanor Marx, an original in Marxism

OUR HISTORIC MOMENT AT THE CROSSROADS OF WORLD REVOLT

The story on “Turkey, Syria and Iran at crossroads of world revolt” (July-Aug. *N&L*) deftly wove those mass movements together by letting the free expression of mass creativity speak for itself. A whole host of reactionary players have taken the stage with deadly instruments and rhetoric that tries to drown the masses out. In light of the new situation in Egypt, a most prescient line is on the pull of this counter-revolution on many who “have written off the masses’ creativity and tenacity.”

Reader
Northern California

June 22 in Turkey: police stopped a crowd gathering at the plaza, but the crowd just pushed its way through and liberated the main street Istiklal! It had been revealed that the police water cannon vehicles are manufactured by two ruling party parliamentarians! People are stopping and controlling the ambulances because earlier they found that the police transport tear gas by hiding it inside them. People are shouting and booing the police: “Police, sell doughnuts but at least live with honor!”

Five hundred people raided a famous ice cream parlor because they closed their doors to people when the police attacked them days earlier. That day, people came to the plaza with carnations because when a woman offered a carnation to the police they responded by gassing her. More than 100,000 people filled the plaza.

Revolutionary from Turkey
In exile

The ideas in the lead are made more urgent and more profound by recent developments. Unrest is not as confinable as the powers that be keep trying to define it. The revolts are a worldwide continuation of Arab Spring. Egypt is now challenging the rush to *stability*.

Activist
Oakland

“Turkey, Syria and Iran” views the situation in those countries, not only as the latest facts, but through the lens of what is new in this historic moment. Much of what I’ve read from the Left does not have a rudder like that to view these events. They bring out interesting facts, and may or may not highlight the right events. But what is needed is to structure your analysis around the philosophic comprehension of events and not let the events be the wind that blows your sails in whatever direction it may be going.

Concerned
Chicago

International Antiwar Assemblies were held Aug. 3-4. Workers, students and others in the meetings renewed their resolve to advance the fight against “wars and poverty” internationally.

They were greatly encouraged by your warmest messages. We the Executive Committee for the Assemblies express heartfelt thanks for your solidarity.

The struggle is ongoing in Okinawa, Japan, in which a million people live and 11% of whose territory is occupied by the U.S. military. We are struggling against the U.S.’s tilt-rotor ‘Ospreys,’ notorious for accidents. It is to be deployed at a base in a densely populated area. On Aug. 3, Zengakuren-affiliated students started an action with militant workers, including a sit-in to block passage to a base gate. On Aug.



4, a U.S. military helicopter crashed into a hill on the Island, causing a forest fire and threatening residents. People’s anger is seething. The U.S. and Japanese governments decided on “a temporary postponement” of the Osprey deployment. People’s protest is growing day by day, and the deployment has stopped.

Masao Yoshida
Japan

ONE NATION UNDER BRUTALITY

In Spanish Harlem: a Mexican woman is selling drinks to hot customers, another has a jewelry display, a man offers “Jobs, right now” to young people and another sells health insurance.

Suddenly there is a commotion in the subway station entry. A big white man in a sports shirt is dragging a Black man down the steps, punching as he goes. Someone yells, “Stop or I’ll call the cops!” The white man yells back, “I am a cop,” and disappears into the station.

Everyone is stunned. But why? It is just more police brutality in a poor New York neighborhood. A squad car roars up and cops jump out like a murder is in progress. Minutes later, one young Black man, cuffed, is marched up the steps and put into the car. A second later, another young Black man, cuffed, again with a cop on each arm, is also marched up the steps and put in the squad car.

Who is he? Who knows? Maybe he said something to one of New York’s “Finest.” Maybe he was too interested in what was going down. In the Bronx, people filming “stop-and-frisk” with cell phones have been arrested. Isn’t it time that we stopped being spectators and got serious about making a revolution that will end all this once and for all?

Eyewitness to brutality
New York

A few weeks ago, I was watching live coverage of the L.A. Trayvon Martin demonstration. A TV station had a reporter in a helicopter “interpreting” every move by the crowd, no matter how

READERS’ VIEWS

innocuous, as being threatening and violent. For example, the demonstrators walked past a fire truck and the reporter said, “Oh! There’s a fire truck! They sometimes go after them!” Somebody got into a car and she said, “Look! Are they stealing that car?” On and on like that.

“They” and “them.” Wild in the streets. The racism was palpable and went unquestioned. In a sense it was everything you needed to know about the verdict, about this country, being shoved right in your face.

Seething at racism
Chicago

Too many racists would rather protect a murderer than provide justice. U.S. “justice” assures that a Black boy has no honor, innocence, value, and no contributions to make.

Another tragedy is the inability to remove racism from law enforcement. Sanford County’s treatment of Trayvon echoes the classic “no prosecution” postures that police, local prosecutors, and judges take. This too painfully familiar pattern was established by white vigilante groups, deputies, and private persons who had an appetite for lynching.

Following Trayvon’s murder, a legion of white donors lined up to contribute to Zimmerman’s defense. They spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to support him and provided him one of the best defense lawyers money could buy.

Ibrahim
Bay Area

In the shadow of the historic Schomburg Library for Black Culture and the Harlem Hospital, the Harlem Book Fair celebrated its 15th anniversary. During the day, thousands, defying the heat, wandered through the exhibits and listened to music that ranged from African drumming to modern jazz. I distributed *News & Letters*, with our website statement on the Trayvon Martin travesty of justice. When I told people of the statement, lots of youth took a copy. One man told me that he hadn’t realized that America was still such a racist country until the verdict came in. A young person told me, “We all feel like targets here,” even in New York City.

Marxist-Humanist
New York City

DETROIT CRISIS

At the same time that the city of Detroit declares bankruptcy, the Willow Run Bomber Plant—the birthplace of the legend of “Rosie the Riveter,” located just outside Detroit—is proposed for demolition. Known to baby boomers as “The Motor City,” to an earlier generation Detroit achieved the honorific title of “The Arsenal of Democracy” during World War II. Now it is all being torn down.

Socialist
Battle Creek, Mich.

It is unclear whether the Detroit bankruptcy will be allowed to proceed. Emergency manager Kevyn Orr was required to negotiate in good faith with the city’s creditors. He has done little in that respect except offering less than 10% of the amount owed to unsecured creditors and the unfunded portion of workers’ pension funds. Orr claims \$3.5 billion of Detroit’s debt is underfunded pension obligations. The funds for retired employees asked a circuit judge to stop the bankruptcy on the grounds that it violates the Michigan State Constitution. It requires full funding of pensions. While the circuit judge ordered the City of Detroit to withdraw its bankruptcy petition, this was undone by the Michigan Court of Appeals.

Observer
Flint, Mich.

WOMEN UNDER ATTACK

The Right wing is attacking Planned Parenthood and forcing women to have invasive ultrasounds with a vaginal probe. They make doctors tell patients things that aren’t true and withhold information from women, for instance if there is something wrong with the fetus. While some doctors are wonderful, as a whole the profession has been pretty dismal—although they did come out against those laws in Texas. Women are going to have to get out in the streets.

Woman labor organizer
Los Angeles



A few weeks ago I was waiting in downtown Chicago for a ride when I found myself surrounded by horrible, blown-up pictures of what was claimed to be aborted fetuses. I had walked into a so-called “pro-life” demonstration. How did they get these pictures? Did these people invade the privacy of a woman’s abortion to get them? I was more disgusted by the anti-abortion fanatics than I was by the pictures. The attacks on our right to abortion represent a wave of hatred toward women’s bodies and an assault on our minds. Only by uprooting this society can we find a pathway to a new one.

Disability rights activist
Chicago

SPORTS SECTION?

I found Artemis’s glorification of race car driver Danica Patrick in the March-April 2013 “Women WorldWide” as some sort of “feminist” hero extremely disconcerting. There is nothing feminist or humanist about burning fossil fuels for any reason; and driving a “race” car is not a sport, NASCAR’s allegations notwithstanding.

Rand W. Gould
Michigan

Your paper helps in many different ways by letting me know what to expect in the world. I love the paper because it really shows how other people around the world are up against it in more ways than one. The paper is fine like it is and all you need to add is sports.

Prisoner
Los Angeles, Calif.

PANOPTICON

A panopticon is an 18th century prison design where the cells are in a circle and the “watcher” in the center. The design allows a watchman to observe (*-opticon*) all (*pan-*) inmates of an institution and they can’t tell whether they are watched or not. The panopticon was intended for “penitentiaries” where people could arrive at penitence for their crimes. But, it merely drove them crazy.

Today technology renders such a building unnecessary. Even George Orwell in the 1940s foresaw TV monitors watching every move of the citizen. And you know that your “meta-” data is available to whoever might want to watch. So you have to watch yourself, right? You don’t want the metadata to be searched, so be sure you don’t do anything “wrong.”

But the number of things to do wrong is logarithmically increased in prison. There you may be accused and convicted without trial. In fact, you don’t have to do anything wrong. You may just be a color a guard doesn’t like. Not Black, brown or poor? Still, you better watch yourself. Maybe I shouldn’t send this into *News & Letters*. It’s OK though. I’m not giving my right name.

Are you going crazy yet?
January
Chicago

SAVVAS MATSAS NEEDS YOUR HELP AGAINST GREEK FASCISTS

Savvas Matsas, a Greek philosopher, literary critic, Biblical scholar and leader of the Marxist Workers Revolutionary Party (EEK), stands charged with “defaming” the Greek neo-Nazi party, Golden Dawn, “inciting violence” against them, and “disturbing the peace.” His case goes to trial on Sept. 3. The evidence for “defamation” seems to be that he called them “criminals”; for the charge of “inciting violence” that he appealed for a fight against fascism; and for the charge of “disturbing the peace” that he wrote a tract calling for a demonstration against them.

The Golden Dawn party is conducting a virulent campaign against Savvas, whom they’ve called “an agent of the international Jewish conspiracy against the Greek nation who is trying to provoke a civil war in order to establish a Jewish-Bolshevik regime.” Sound familiar?

As outrageous as the charges against Savvas, is that Greece’s conservative Government, which has several

Cabinet members whose origins lie in the extreme right, should consider such legally protected behavior as worthy of judicial action. This may even be the first time that any country that pretends to be a democracy has made opposition to fascism into a crime. If it succeeds in Greece, it won’t be the last.

Savvas has called for letters that support his “right” to fight fascism in all the ways listed in the charges be sent to him as soon as possible. Even one line will do. Letters are already beginning to flood in from Greece and several other countries. We have a chance to make a difference—for Savvas, perhaps for Greece, and maybe even for ourselves. Take a moment and write, and then forward this appeal to all your contacts who take the fight against fascism (and the state’s protection, bordering on open support, of the fascists in its midst) as seriously as Savvas does. Savvas’ email address is: savvasmatsas@gmail.com

Bertell Ollman
Department of Politics, NYU

VORKUTA

It takes an ability to see among the revolts, so many of them crushed, which ones have the quality that makes them “new pages of freedom.” In 1859 Marx wrote that the most important developments in the world were the movements of the serfs in Russia and the slaves in the U.S. The latest slave revolt had “naturally been suppressed,” but he didn’t think that was their end. In the same way, Dunayevskaya (“Russia more than ever full of revolutionaries...” July-Aug. *N&L*) knew the 1953 uprisings were not over, but the beginning of the end of Russian totalitarianism. That takes philosophy. People decide that the Arab Spring is dead, or see only the army in charge in one country, or political Islam in charge someplace else—but one has to look at long-lasting footprints of revolution in the Middle East.

Taking the long view
Chicago

“Russia more than ever full of revolutionaries...” is a model of philosophic comprehension of events—not only giving details of the revolt and the thought behind it. That is combined with a conclusion that the 1953 revolts were the beginning of the end of Russian totalitarianism. Hardly anyone agreed until the Hungarian Revolution broke out, but in retrospect anyone can see how true it was.

Environmentalist
Midwest

The 1953 Vorkuta slave labor revolt signaled the beginning of mass revolts in the post-WWII world which shook up the idea that revolt was not possible in a totalitarian society. Everyone was assumed to be totally brainwashed. Some leftists still speak this way of North Korea in a positive sense. Thus, the reports of a revolt right from within a slave labor camp, coming shortly after the East German revolt, were met with profound skepticism.

Revolutionary
Oakland

COMMUNIZATION DEBATE

Before I read this essay (“Communization theory and its discontents truncate Marx’s dialectic,” July-Aug. *N&L*), I had a sense that the CT people paid a lot of attention to Marx on the Paris Commune and how it knocked down the existing social relations. I think they take that to mean all you need is to knock down existing social relations and just relate to each other as humans. But immediate relations are impossible.

David
Oakland

There are a lot of anti-state, anti-vanguard tendencies who are all for spontaneity and masses, yet when it comes to the dialectic are really vulgar materialists. They reduce dialectic to that which happens under capitalism, not the most inward human dimension that is both the means and end of realizing freedom. I took that to be the point of the essay.

Student of the dialectic
Oakland

DISABILITY PRIDE

Gaily decorated floats swept down the street and happy, spirited people marched in the 10th annual Disability Pride Parade in Chicago on July 20. For the first time, people lined the streets watching. The parade aims to change the way people think about and define “disability,” and to end the internalized shame among people with disabilities. The parade also serves as a reminder of discrimination the disabled face in employment, housing, public accommodations and even programs designed to serve them. I agree with an organizer who said, “It’s a fight for freedom for our people. The disabled are often forgotten about in other freedom movements and their needs ignored. It’s our job to make sure that ends.”

S. Rose
Chicago

On Aug. 16, about 30 disability rights activists from Access Living, ADAPT and other groups descended on the Department of Health Care and Family Services (DHCFS) to make our

demands known. “Nothing about us, without us,” we chanted. DHCFS wants to change the evaluation tool that decides who qualifies for homecare and how much service they will get, but they are excluding from the process people with disabilities who are most affected by these decisions. We also demanded an end to the Maximus contract. Maximus is a company hired by the State of Illinois to reduce the number of people on Medicaid. They are throwing people off Medicaid and getting paid for every person they get rid of. If they can’t reach you, or your telephone number or address has changed, they kick you off. Maximus is also losing people’s paperwork. People are getting letters saying their Medicaid is ending without being given a reason.

Feminist
Chicago

WHO READS *N&L*?

Having read my first issue of *News & Letters*, I see that it supports the unity between thought and action, that one cannot be complete without the other. The philosophy is not completely understandable to me, but I have an excitement about learning what it means that I have not felt before. I see articles from many different groups fighting for freedom and I have not seen such complete coverage on these different groups in other left newspapers. I am especially appreciative of the Woman as Reason page and the coverage of Turkey, Syria and Iran in the July-August issue. I learned many things. Keep up the great work!

Revolutionary greetings! Thank you for shedding light on the many struggles of our day. Thank you for educating the masses about our responsibilities as human beings, and lastly, thank you for keeping it real. Your paper has kept me on my feet throughout the years and fed me with plenty of knowledge. I did 14 years in solitary confinement/administrative confinement. Your paper kept me alive, and you gave me new ideas regarding the collective betterment and upliftment of my people and all oppressed

nationals. Prisoners/Kaptives make up the bulk of the 99% and your paper, its ideas ranging from the Queer struggle to the Black struggle all the way to the prison struggle, affect our struggle in a tremendous way.

Prisoner
Green Bay, Wis.

PRISONERS SPEAK

The fight for one’s human rights is not always easy, but it’s necessary. Not only is protesting a right, it’s your constitutional right. Which is so very important for all of us to remember, because the oppressors don’t follow the Constitution when it comes to us, the oppressed! So no matter where you are, if you’re being repressed, undressed, suppressed, regressed, depressed and outright oppressed by the powers that be—it’s in your best interests to PROTEST!

Prisoner
California death row

I am writing to thank you for your prisoner fund subscription to *News & Letters*, as well as for your support of the Pelican Bay Hunger Strike. Your paper is very educational and enlightening!

Prisoner
Crescent City, Calif.

I am a prisoner serving a life sentence here at Folsom State Prison. Can you please find a donor to pay for my subscription? Thank you.

Prisoner
Represa, Calif.

TO OUR READERS: Can you donate \$5, the price of a subscription, for a prisoner who cannot pay for one? It will be shared with many others. A donation of \$8 pays for a subscription plus the new Pelican Bay Hunger Strike pamphlet to be sent to a prisoner.

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9-10/13

Prison hunger strikers demand: Stop torture and violence!

On July 8 over 30,000 prisoners in California started an indefinite hunger strike to demand their human rights (see “SHU hunger strike,” July-Aug. 2013 *N&L*). Prison officials have retaliated against the prisoners’ right to peacefully protest. At Pelican Bay those who signed the historic “Agreement to End Hostilities” have been moved from their cells to ad-seg (administrative segregation) with no papers, not even their legal papers, and no clothing. Cold air is being pumped full blast into already cold rooms. Two of the prisoners’ representatives who were moved were not even on hunger strike! At Corcoran prison those considered “leaders” have also been moved. In the process the guards destroyed prisoners’ property, specifically their legal papers.

The prisons are impeding communication as they retaliate. They don’t seem to know that it is not a “conspiracy,” that it is the prison system’s own actions that led so many people to join the protest. Their attitude is revealed in the banning of *News & Letters* and other publications that reprint prisoners’ statements expressing solidarity. They declared it “gang communication” through which the leaders are issuing orders to other prisoners. Their inverted reality borders on insanity. The persisting core communication to all prisoners from this movement has been to end all hostilities based on gang identification.

DERANGED PRISON OFFICIALS

As hunger striker Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa began his moving Aug. 14 letter:

“I would like to reiterate that the Agreement to End All Hostilities, issued Aug. 12, 2012, is significant for all prisoners because CDCR (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation) has encouraged prisoners in their 33 prisons to not only engage in self-destructive behavior but has also helped heighten racial hostilities—the catalyst for internal warfare, racial warfare and gang warfare—all of which has been magnified inside the prisons and throughout our communities....

“We realize nothing productive can be done to change the current state of our situation, our prison environment, unless we end the hostilities between prisoners and end all racial and gang violence within the CDCR.” (San Francisco Bay View, Aug. 16, 2013)

On July 23, day 16 of the hunger strike, the prisoners issued a statement, which reads in part “Prisoners across the state are participating because of the inhumane conditions they are being subjected to. As HUMAN BEINGS, prisoners are collectively resisting such treatment, and they are doing so peacefully.

“The attempted repression of our protest has not broken our spirits. In fact it has only helped to strengthen us—individually and collectively. Despite CDCR’s retaliations and propaganda, we remain steadfast in our commitment. We will see our peaceful hunger strike through to victory...”

On Aug. 2, I had an opportunity to visit several prisoners at Corcoran. They reported various ways in which prison guards retaliate against the hunger strikers. For example, everyone got write-ups for participating, which will be used at their next review as proof they engaged in gang activity.

CDCR makes engaging in a hunger strike against what is internationally recognized as tor-

News & Letters banned in Pelican Bay

continued from p. 1
of long-term SHU confinement.

On July 10 the Crescent City channel 3 newscast had a piece on the hunger strike throughout the California prison system. It said that the hunger strike happened in at least 24 out of the 33 prisons in this state, and it was estimated that 30,000 prisoners weren’t accepting prison rations. It mentioned that prisoners held in the SHU were demanding an end to long-term SHU confinement.

On July 10 prisoners on various kinds of medications received a form from M. Sayre, M.D., letting us know that we have been subjected to a stop medication order. This can have very detrimental consequences for prisoners who suffer from serious illnesses like diabetes.

On July 11 the correctional officers (COs) descended upon all of the short corridor representatives, taking them out of their assigned cages and escorting them to administrative segregation (Ad-Seg). Without a doubt it was in retaliation for their sheer audacity to speak out about the unjust nature of long-term SHU confinement. They were taken without any personal property, for example, clothing to keep them warm.

On July 12 I was prevented from receiving the July-August issue of *N&L* because page 9 had an article on the Pelican Bay hunger strike. This decision shows frustration on the part of COs over their inability to prevent the hunger strike and to control the message.

Whatever comes out of our present efforts, good or bad, it can’t be seen as the end, but a new jumping off point in which to begin the fulfillment of what it means to be human beings.

—Faruq, Pelican Bay SHU

ture, into a reason to keep torturing you.

Prisoners’ canteen has been cut, their mail (in and out) delayed or withheld, additional days in solitary have been added, visits denied, etc.

One extreme retaliation was to deny medical care to Billy Sell, who kept requesting a medical evaluation of his condition. The guards told him, “You’re not eating, what do you expect, it’s just hunger pains.” When he was able to see a nurse, she just took his vitals and then yelled at him for disturbing her. A day later Billy Sell died. The prison claims it was a suicide unrelated to the hunger strike. Yet the prisoners in adjoining cells saw that he never took a tray of food, he participated in the strike to the end. One prisoner told me,

Families stand up for prisoners’ rights



Marie Levin at a demonstration in front of Corcoran prison, July 13.

Editor’s note: Marie Levin spoke at many of the demonstrations. This statement is from July 31.

Oakland, Calif.—My name is Marie Levin. My brother, Sitawa Jamaa, is in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) at Pelican Bay. He has been on hunger strike since its beginning, 24 days now. It’s a shame that our government has allowed these prisoners to go this long, 24 days of sacrificing their bodies in response to the injustice they are receiving. I am here to stand with them, and I am so happy that there are so many of you here to stand with them as well.

The five core demands are just human things that you and I would expect: end group punishment and administrative abuse; abolish the de-briefing policy and modify the gang status criteria; comply with the U.S. Commission recommendations to end long-term solitary confinement; provide nutritious food; create and expand constructive programming. These are easy things for California Department of Corrections (CDCR) to grant. Who would not want a person locked in solitary to have a program that gets them acclimated to the public? People released from solitary back onto the street, within three years are back in prison. If they would be allowed into the mainline and mingle with other people, they would have a better chance to succeed when they get out.

Recently we went to Sacramento to take 60,000 signatures on a petition supporting the prisoners’ demands to Gov. Jerry Brown. We weren’t able to speak directly to him. Ron Ahnen of California Prison Focus, Dolores Huerta and I—a white man and a Hispanic and a Black woman—walked up to his office, showing that the different races can stick together. We walked inside. Those signatures are usually accepted only by the mailroom. But with all the attention, we were able to take them directly to the governor’s office. Then we walked to the CDCR building. CDCR did not allow the mediation team inside.

The lawyers able to visit hunger strikers report that they are very strong, very positive. Normally the prisoners in the SHU cannot see each other. As a punitive measure, CDCR put the hunger strikers in Ad-Seg (administrative segregation), an even worse part of the prison than the SHU. They were put there without their property, specifically their legal documents or even their regular clothing, just their underclothes, and they have cold air pumped in full blast. But in Ad-Seg they can get outside and see sunlight, which they don’t get in the SHU. More importantly, in Ad-Seg they get an opportunity to see one another, to speak to one another. Although their bodies are becoming weak, they are very strong in their spirit. They are willing to go on and on and on.

We stand together on the outside as they stand together on the inside. We are hopeful that CDCR will make the changes and that the governor will put pressure on them to do that. We are looking forward to gathering even more support. Recently a letter signed by some prominent people, including Jay Leno, for example, got some publicity. All across California, the U.S. and abroad, people support what these prisoners are fighting for.

Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!

“Billy was our family! We’ll be happy to testify on his behalf. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain.”

Another prisoner stressed the insanity of the prison administration pursuing the strategy of not yielding. He said,

“This is the final push. The administration is so disrespectful we have to continue. The conditions here are so evil, they do drive people to suicide. This is their version of torture. Men and women tire of this disrespect. We’re able to do this because of the support from you (the outside). We feel we have been heard in many countries. You are magnificent in exposing CDCR!”

OUTSIDE SOLIDARITY CRUCIAL

In fact, there have been dozens of actions: demonstrations, press conferences, public petition deliveries to officials, etc., all over California, the U.S. and across the world. An open letter to California’s governor Brown has been signed by over 60,000, including a host of prominent people and is still collecting signatures (see <http://www.stoptortureca.org/take-action/open-letter-to-governor-brown/>). Another open letter, signed by over 120 medical professionals, decries the state of medical care in prisons, especially gross violations of medical ethics towards hunger strikers. (See “Hunger Strike Reaches 40 Days, Health Concerns Critical, Prisoners Hospitalized, Medical Professionals Continue to Speak Out,” at <http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com>.)

Of special significance is that at most events the prisoners’ families have taken a leading role. They have been at the forefront of organizing events and speaking eloquently to prisoners’ aspirations to be treated as human beings. (See Marie Levin’s statement at the July 31 rally in Oakland as an example.)

Mail from prisoners is rare. But in what they are able to send, their spirits are high. This can be seen in a letter from Pelican Bay:

“Today is the 32nd day of the hunger strike, and I’m really starting to feel it (physically)...[S]o far I’ve lost over 40 lbs., my energy level is at rock-bottom, and it’s becoming increasingly difficult to concentrate! But, my spirit is still soaring with the eagles; and, emotionally and mentally, I’m strong and unwavering in my conviction to follow this through to the end. If necessary, some of us are ready and willing to take it to the grave...”

“They’ve been holding all our mail (both incoming and outgoing) for loooong stretches, in retaliation for us hunger-striking. Also, you’ve probably noticed I have a ‘new’ cell number. That’s because they have gaffled us up and thrown us into Ad-Seg, which has even harsher conditions. But, that little petty stuff doesn’t faze me.

“Please know that your continued support out there means everything to us.”

As we go to press, the strike has lasted over 40 days. The prison admits that there are at least 118 people on continuous hunger strike since it began. CDCR has taken many more off the list who are still not eating, and others have started eating for a time and stopped again.

Continued support from the outside is most critical now. Do what you can, make noise, write a letter to the editor of your local paper, write to CDCR, hang a banner from your window or a freeway overpass and send us a picture! Any act of solidarity puts pressure on CDCR to accomplish a change the prisoners are dying for.

—Urszula Wislanka

No new LA jails!

Los Angeles—On July 16, over 100 activists held a “no new prison” press conference and rally outside the L.A. County Board of Supervisors meeting. People, mostly youths, made public comments to the board to stop their plans to spend over \$2 billion to build two new county jails. One is a 1,156-bed women’s jail called the “Women’s Village.” Another will replace the existing Men’s Central Jail with a new one that has high security mental-health cages in a tower. County sheriffs are in favor of these proposals because they provide prison guards for all L.A. County jails, whose budget is the largest in the world.

Some of the public comments and signs urged that L.A. County reject \$100 million of state money to build prisons. Rather than caging people, grant the money to community-based organizations and alternative solutions. “Prisons create mental illness,” “Invest in life and welfare, not wars and prisons,” and “Jails break up family unity,” read some of the signs. Society needs to shift from mass incarceration to human programs for the mostly poor population, which is growing daily in today’s global economic capitalist crisis.

—Basho

From the belly of the beast

Hunger-striking Pelican Bay prisoners speak
\$3 per copy, \$5 to also pay for one to go to a prisoner.
To order, see page 7.

We Are Bradley Manning



Veterans For Peace

Editor’s note: After this was written, Manning took the name Chelsea Manning, identifying as a woman.

Memphis—Bradley Manning, a 25-year-old Army private first class, decided to take it upon himself to expose what he saw as the government’s egregious wrongdoing. At his pretrial hearing last winter, Manning told the court: “I believe that if the general public, especially the American public, had access to the [war data] this could spark a domestic debate on the role of the military and our foreign policy in general...as it related to Iraq and Afghanistan.”

In 2010, the appearance of the stunning “Collateral Murder” video on YouTube, published by Wikileaks, attracted the attention of millions of American citizens, including the Memphis (“Martin Luther King”) chapter of Veterans for Peace (VFP). The film had been turned over to Wikileaks by Bradley Manning.

The video shows the grim reality of war: helicopter-borne soldiers gunning down unarmed Iraqi men, later discovered to be journalists. Minutes later, when a rescue van pulls up, it too is taken under fire, seriously wounding two children. The Defense Department denied having the video, and were it not for Wikileaks and Bradley Manning, the public might never have seen it.

Manning hoped that his brave act would trigger a massive public shift in attitude. So far that has not occurred. Things could still happen. Edward Snowden’s bravery may have been inspired by the young soldier.

Manning’s trial has set off a firestorm within the American pro-peace community. “I Am Bradley Manning” has become a universal slogan of solidarity. In July, VFP Memphis posted its own. The sign reads “We Are Bradley Manning.” The photo was placed on the website “I Am Bradley Manning” (BradleyManning.org). It joins tens of thousands of similar photos sent in mostly by U.S. civilians. Veterans are not alone. Perhaps Private Manning’s hope will be fulfilled and a citizen uprising will bring him home. FREE BRADLEY MANNING.

—George Grider

Coordinator, Memphis Chapter, VFP

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

Lurie Children’s Hospital’s pediatric gender-identity clinic in Chicago joins a handful of healthcare facilities in the U.S. giving care and support to Transgender and gender-variant children and their families. Inspired by Boston Children’s Hospital’s Gender Management Service Clinic—the first such U.S. clinic—Lurie’s is the only such clinic in the Midwest. Part of the clinic’s program is to offer the children the space and time they need to decide who they are. Dr. Robert Garofalo, head of the clinic, hopes that the support this center offers will be a model for many such facilities in the near future.

* * *

Studies by Columbia University and Northwestern University revealed that Bisexual men are significantly more anxious and depressed than their Gay and Straight counterparts. It was also found that poor mental health is more likely among those who keep closeted because they have neither a language—in this case of fluid sexuality—with which to communicate their experiences and feelings, nor a community with whom to speak and share safe space.

* * *

It is great that the Defense of Marriage Act/DOMA and California’s Proposition 8 were struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. It is also important that members of the United for Marriage Coalition apologized to Transgender and undocumented immigrant supporters of marriage equality for telling them to keep quiet as they all rallied on the steps of the Court as it heard arguments against and for DOMA and Proposition 8. The Human Rights Campaign, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and others recognized that the apologies were insufficient, so they committed to further steps for healing, including seeking ways in which Queer rights supporters can act together for the realization of equality and justice for all.

Lac Mégantic: capitalism’s train wreck

Quebec, Canada—On July 6, around 1:15 AM, an unattended 74-car freight train filled with crude oil derailed and exploded in the center of the town of Lac Mégantic, Québec. After its brakes had failed, it rolled seven miles down a slope at a high rate of speed. The number of dead is believed to be 47, though only 42 bodies were found. The other missing five are presumed to have been vaporized by the intense heat of the fire. Half the downtown was destroyed, including public records, historic archives, and 30 historic buildings. The events revealed an unimaginable degree of corruption.

There are signs of a cover-up from many official and corporate sources. This catastrophe was avoidable with even the slightest attention to safety, and is a result of cutting corners to save money, and the lack of anyone in charge taking responsibility for any aspect of the negligence, including those in the government.

In the past ten years, the amount of hazardous materials transported through Canada by rail has increased many-fold, though it is almost impossible to get accurate statistics. The mayors of several municipalities which have freight lines running through or near them have been stonewalled in their efforts to obtain this and other information which they need to ensure the safety of people living in their areas.

The chain of negligence and criminal behavior is long. The U.S.-owned railway which operated the train, the *Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway* (MMA) since 2003, is a company which buys segments of rail line considered unprofitable, and uses them for freight. In 2007, they were offered millions of dollars in 2:1 federal and provincial matching funds to improve track conditions, which they turned down. Already, Transport Canada (CT) standards for track conditions and rolling stock are lax by most standards, as are Québec provincial standards.

For one thing, both CT and the U.S. Federal Rail-

Creating new Detroit

continued from p. 5

Street, a flourishing center of music and culture in the Black community. The exodus of the white population was fueled by racist real estate practices that guaranteed property values would decline when Black families moved into white neighborhoods.

In the same period, capitalism profited from the suburbanization of the entire country and revolutions in production methods due to automation. The four-square-mile Ford Rouge plant employed 80,000 people when bloody battles were fought there to establish the UAW; it now has around 2,000 workers.

Marx had seen, despite physical and mental alienation, the factory workers’ potential for cooperation on the job. So did the capitalists: thousands, large and small, abandoned plants and businesses in Detroit. They have never been held accountable for securing and cleaning those sites, including the toxic wastes left behind. Furthermore, those at People’s Forum read this history as the disempowerment of Black power. The disempowerment continues today in the plan called “Detroit Future Cities, the next 50 years.”

Recently, there is a new image being projected: “Detroit is coming back.” Long-empty downtown high-rise buildings are being bought up and renovated for young professional residences and upscale retail businesses. Some have evicted low-income senior tenants to do so. Meanwhile, the majority of neighborhoods in this 139-square-mile city continue to languish, with poor bus service, unkempt parks, vacant houses and lots. One third of the streetlights are dark, and there are only 20 city ambulances and 800 firefighters for a population of 700,000.

But a different Detroit is struggling to be realized in the minds and hearts of its citizens: individuals (unrecognized thousands of whom routinely maintain nearby abandoned property) as well as organizations—from churches and small businesses to youth and athletic programs, block clubs and neighborhood associations, and social and environmental justice organizations. Political and economic uncertainty has led to a resurgence of community self-organization, a conviction that “it’s up to us.” The question, “What kind of human society do we want, can we create?” is implicit in Detroit right now.

The challenge is to envision and work out that society against the opposition that comes from the capitalists, who want to rebuild their empires on our scorched earth, as well as the limitations of thinking that stop us short of building a human-based world. As important to a community as the practical aspects of safe, clean neighborhoods are the ideas for the kind of society we want. One participant at the People’s Forum emphasized, “We don’t just want to rebuild Detroit, we want to *redesign* Detroit.” We can envision a self-organized, human-based society and make it a principle of our own activity to elicit, critically discuss and realize humanistic social relations.

—Detroit Marxist-Humanists

road Administration (USFRA) allowed (not “permitted,” as the required permit process, which requires public input, was ignored) Single Person Train Operation (SPTO). Already in 2010, a former MMA engineer warned that both SPTO and 12-hour shifts were unsafe. MMA and government regulatory agencies simply chose to ignore the law. The tank cars involved had only a single shell, and had been deemed unsafe by the NTSB in 2009. But railway and petroleum interests lobbied fiercely against their replacement. These single-shell cars still make up 80% of the MMA fleet.

World Fuel Services, which is responsible for many of the cars, may be liable for some of this tragedy. Just two weeks before the accident, there was a 13,000-liter diesel oil spill on the same line, three miles east of Lac Mégantic when a single-shell car ruptured.

Other government negligence arises from the fact that though the federal and provincial governments moved the transport of hazardous materials out of the centers of major cities, they did not do so for smaller towns. Perhaps they saw human safety there as less important.

MMA first tried to lay the blame for the fire on the firefighters who responded to the explosions and fires. When that didn’t work, they tried to blame it on the engineer, for failure to set the brake properly and leaving the train on a slope when his shift ended. He was not perfect, but it is MMA that refused to provide a security guard, or any other kind of backup personnel.

It was their policy to leave their trains unattended, with the cab unlocked. Investigators have already revealed that MMA knew about technical difficulties with the train the evening before and ignored warnings.

Environmental damage is extensive, but none of the parties involved have yet taken any responsibility for it. Waterways in Québec and the U.S. state of Maine have been severely damaged. Canadian Pacific, which had a hand in the incident, refuses to pay for any cleanup, as does MMA. In Harmon, Maine, on the U.S. side of the border, protesters have picketed the offices of MMA. There is little action from the Canadian government and a lot of finger-pointing, and there is disarray, though some promise of action, by the provincial government. Prime Minister Harper and Premier Marois showed up for ceremonies and speeches, but there is little of substance coming from them yet.

What is most macabre is that proponents of the Keystone XL and other pipelines have jumped on this tragedy to support their interests in pipeline transport, which is in fact no safer.

This tragedy was entirely preventable with even the most basic attention to safety for workers, for the people living near the railways, and for their environment. Instead, it was all about saving money and profits, “cutting, cutting cutting...” costs and personnel, to quote a former train engineer. This is the nature of capitalism, the complete disregard for human life, and the lessons are not lost on the people of Canada, Québec, and Maine. During the summer, many people are out of town, and there has yet to be a mass mobilization over this in Québec, but it has left deep scars, and the outrage will not go away. We can expect changes and deep opposition all over Canada to the kind of disregard for human life that happened here. To end this kind of tragedy requires a whole new human society.

—D. Chêneville, Ti-Ouistiti, Hélène Laliberté, PJ

Word Up re-opens

New York City—Over 100 enthusiastic community members in the predominantly Latino/a Washington Heights neighborhood celebrated the opening of the Word Up Community Bookstore after nearly a year of enforced exile. A local political leader spoke, poetry was read, music was played and ethnic food was served as hundreds of people throughout the two-hour grand opening circulated through the store.

Word Up had lost their space last year when the landlord raised the rent. They embarked on a citywide fundraising drive to raise money for a new place. They raised over \$60,000. As one volunteer told me with pride, they were able to get a five-year lease “and we aren’t going anywhere.” Once the lease was signed, volunteers sprang into action, bringing books out of storage, transporting them to the new location, cleaning the place up, building bookcases, etc. At the reopening ceremony the 40 or so volunteers were honored.

Community members, including lifelong residents of the neighborhood, told me that this is the first time this neighborhood has had a fully stocked bookstore. Young Latinas said they intended to become regular customers, and a couple told me that the opening of the bookstore was a great event for the community.

Word Up carries books in English and Spanish, both fiction and nonfiction, including books by Raya Dunayevskaya in Spanish. There is a performance space for literary and cultural events and the bookstore is operated in large part by volunteer workers, people dedicated to the idea of being a part of the cultural renaissance of the Washington Heights community.

—Radical New Yorker

Racism and the fight against it take center stage in U.S.

continued from p. 1

killed each day by law enforcement, security guards, or vigilantes. (See www.operationghettostorm.org.) Those who live in targeted communities already know a history of unpunished police murders, from Raymond Herisse in Miami to Rekia Boyd in Chicago, from Juan Chavez in Los Angeles to Ramarley Graham in New York.

Vigilantism and lynching have long been accepted as unofficial, and sometimes official, extensions of the state’s powers of violence used to maintain the country’s racialized class structure. Three centuries ago, white men in bands patrolled Southern states to fight the never-ending escapes and rebellions of slaves. Some states organized these slave patrols as militias, which became a principal motivation for the Second Amendment’s recognition of militias’ right to bear arms. That was just one of the ways in which the incompleteness of the American Revolution resulted in the enshrinement of slavery in the Constitution.

A new phase of “justice” issued from the unfinished nature of the second revolution, that is, the Civil War and Reconstruction. As *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard* shows:

“The three basic constituents of the betrayal, that is to say, the unfinished state of revolution, were: 1) the freedmen did not get ‘the 40 acres and a mule’ they were promised; 2) the old slave owners did get back their plantations and thus the power to institute a mode of production to suit cotton culture; and 3) the crop lien system was introduced with ‘new’ labor: sharecropping....

“Naturally the infamous ‘black codes’ which the plantation owners now enacted and were free to execute and ‘the gentlemen’s agreement’ with Northern capital, as well as with the help of the KKK, paved the royal road back for white supremacy South. But once we place the problem in its proper economic framework, the *human* factors can emerge and then we can see the limitations of all laws, written and unwritten.”

PRISON COMPLEX REPLACES JIM CROW

On this economic foundation, the slave patrols and the slavemaster’s summary justice were replaced by the growth of the prison system, with the forced labor of Black convicts. Its adjunct, the KKK and lynch mobs, were proof of the ceaseless struggles of African Americans for freedom.

When the Jim Crow system was finally destroyed

by the Black revolution of the 1960s, the reaction against that movement and against the other freedom movements it inspired, seized upon the movement’s incompleteness. The state unleashed a “war on crime” and a “drug war” involving demonization of Blacks and Latinos and an explosive growth of the prison system. The number of people in prisons and jails shot up from 338,029 in 1970, to 2,424,279 by 2008. About two thirds are people of color.

A new level of rebelliousness of Latinos—from farmworker strikes to urban youth revolts to solidarity and communication with revolutionary upheavals in the Americas—brought them into the sights of the injustice system alongside African Americans.

This current phase of racialized class “justice” begins at school, where Black students are 3.5 times as likely to be suspended or expelled as whites. Black youth referred to juvenile court are much more likely to be punished, including being tried as adults. Black drug users are more than four times as likely to be incarcerated as white. In some U.S. cities, 80% of young Black men have criminal records.

The criminal injustice system starts early and works overtime to brand African-American and Latino youth with a racially biased stigma, under a semblance of colorblind objectivity. The stigma sanctions second-class status in jobs, housing and voting rights, and is self-righteously used by pundits, politicians and everyday racists to defend the exploitative class structure of our society.

Above all they seek to keep white workers divided from people of color, whose unity could threaten the very foundations of U.S. capitalism. For this reason, they encourage racial polarization behind bars and attack the racial unity achieved in resistance—from the 2010 Georgia prison strike to the California prisoners’ hunger strike, still going at press time. (See “Prison hunger strikers,” p. 8.)

American Civilization on Trial shows that decisive turning points in U.S. history have come about when Black masses and white workers coalesced in their quest for freedom. To give up on such coalescence is to abandon revolution, and therefore to accept this murderous capitalist order. What is needed instead is to prevent yet another revolution from remaining unfinished due to the lack of a unifying philosophy.

RESISTANCE TO ECONOMIC INJUSTICE RISES

Today’s resistance to the criminal injustice system and vigilantism occurs in the context of simmering discontent with the overall crisis-ridden society, marked by social retrogression and economic depression for the majority, as against the capitalists raking in their profits.

Unemployment and poverty are brutal for whites and twice as bad for Blacks. Across all races, four out of five U.S. adults spend at least part of their lives in poverty, near-poverty, unemployment or welfare. It is no accident that workers in fast food, Walmart and other low-wage jobs have begun to strike and organize, with the new militancy of Latino workers, documented or not, unleashing formidable energy for class struggles since 2006. (See “NYC fast food strikes,” p. 3.)

Resistance has also been stirred by the attacks on the vote. “Our country has changed,” Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts pontificated on June 25, as a transparent pretext for gutting the 1965 Voting Rights Act—not long after another Supreme Court decision made it almost impossible to sue an employer for racial or sexual harassment. The Justice Department no longer has the power to reject discriminatory changes to voting laws and practices by a number of states and jurisdictions—a power that had been used to strike down several laws aimed at suppressing the votes of people of color in 2012, and many times before that.

Just as the 2012 voter suppression efforts sparked numerous protests and long lines at the polls, so have marches and sit-ins met the new round of voter suppression unleashed by the Supreme Court’s decision. The bill in North Carolina, with blatantly racist intent and effect, sparked the Moral Monday series of protests, which grew to oppose a whole raft of reactionary legislation that attacks the unemployed, the poor, teachers, prisoners, women’s right to abortions and environmental protection, and showering tax breaks on the rich. The rallies are spreading across the state. Since April thousands of people have come out to the weekly protests, with over 1,000 arrested for civil disobedience as of Aug. 12. (See “Outpouring in Raleigh, N.C.,” p. 11.)

OBAMA IGNORES RACIST JUSTICE SYSTEM

While the Obama administration is intervening against voter suppression in Texas and other states, there is one aspect it will not touch: disenfranchisement of convicted felons. Clearly, the election of a Black

President and his appointment of a Black Attorney General have not ended racism either generally or in the criminal injustice system. Even after the racist 100-to-1 disparity in crack vs. powdered cocaine sentencing was reduced in 2010 to “only” 18-to-1, the administration is keeping 5,000 people in prison who would be free if the law had been in effect when they were sentenced. With the stroke of a pen, President Obama could pardon them. However, his Justice Department is actually appealing a court ruling that they should have an opportunity for redress.

Nor can one be comforted by the trial balloon floated by Obama when he suggested that New York City Police Chief Ray Kelly, champion of stop-and-frisk, would be an excellent candidate to head the Department of Homeland Security.

All these facets of regression and revolt not only have brought attention to the Aug. 24 March on Washington commemorating the 50th anniversary of the historic 1963 March. They also guarantee that the struggles will continue long afterwards. Just as the 1963 March was but one high point of a whole Freedom Now movement, today there are many struggles, many debates, many strands of movements, crying out to coalesce into a mass movement that can shake the foundations of this racist, sexist, capitalist society. We can hardly afford to downplay the need for philosophy and let this become another short-circuited movement or another unfinished revolution. All these strands of revolt need not only to unite but to deepen, to raise a banner of total freedom, so as to open the way to a reconstruction of society on new human beginnings.

August 18, 2013

Down with ALEC!



Close to 2,000 people, many from labor unions, rallied in Chicago against the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) on Aug. 8. ALEC helps corporations foist legislation on states, from “right to work” to “stand your ground,” anti-environment to anti-immigrant to anti-woman.

‘This is Canada’

On July 25, a piece of pure hate speech appeared in the *Huffington Post Canada*, “Is Quebec Good Enough for Canada?” by Diane Weber Bederman, whom the Post describes as “a multi-faith-endorsed, hospital-trained chaplain.”

Bederman accuses French-Canadians of “secular fundamentalism...destructive of the bi-lingual, multi-ethnic fabric of Canada,” of “uni-lingualism and uni-cultural absolutism...a throwback to tribalism...” “racism,” and at the end, “...verging on fascism.” Her rant continues with a dishonest history of Canada since World War I, emphasizing Quebec’s opposition to conscription in both world wars, and blames Quebec for Canada’s failure to accept Jewish refugees during World War II. All of this with no supporting evidence.

The facts are otherwise. Quebec is one of only two bilingual provinces, the other being New Brunswick. All eight other provinces are militantly unilingual. Anti-militarism was a good thing, and created the space for U.S. draft resisters to take refuge in Canada during the 1960s. The decision to turn back Jews during World War II was made by Prime Minister Mackenzie-King, not Quebec. There was an infamous letter of May 18, 1942, from FDR to Mackenzie-King which every scholar of Canadian history knows about.

Why did the *Huffington Post* print Bederman’s letter, and why are some Canadian leaders promoting her views? It shows how far Canada has shifted to the Right since Stephen Harper became Prime Minister in 2006. The revolutionary political activism of Quebec students and labor, the better social safety net, the protections for free speech, the anti-militarism, the striving for freedom, which are so present in Quebec, are perceived as a threat by Canada’s elite; as is the possibility that English-Canadian workers will unite with their French-speaking compatriots.

Bederman may have done Quebecers a favor by revealing the true bankruptcy of today’s Canada. One reader summed up Bederman’s hate-piece with three simple words: “This is Canada.” That is a question that has yet to be answered.

—D. Chêneville and PJ



by Suzanne Rose

Minors with mental health problems and other disabilities are held in “unconscionable conditions” of 23-hour solitary confinement, deliberately cut off from education and rehabilitation at a San Francisco Bay area juvenile hall, alleges a lawsuit filed in federal court in Northern California. The class-action suit against Contra Costa County probation and school officials accuses them of locking young people in small cells for days at a time in response to behavior stemming from the children’s disabilities, and then depriving them of education as part of a three-tier system of isolation.

* * *

Samantha Torres, of New Bedford, Mass., said her 5-year-old daughter Nadia, who suffers from a chromosome abnormality and can’t speak, was thrown out of a theater with her family because she was making giggling and humming noises that she makes when she’s happy. Nadia was humming along with “Beauty and the Beast” when they were asked to leave. A theater marketing director said the girl was distracting others and the family was offered different seats. Torres says they were never offered the chance to change seats and that the only people bothered by Nadia were the ushers.

* * *

A Providence, R.I., school for developmentally disabled students allegedly violated the Americans with Disabilities Act by making students work manual labor for little or no pay. The Harold H. Birch Vocational School operated a “sheltered workshop” that segregated kids with disabilities from other students. The school denied them the opportunity for integrated employment when they completed their education by funneling them into a similar program after graduation. The pupils, contracted to private businesses, worked at bagging, labeling, collating and assembling jewelry. Some were not paid at all. The rest received between 50¢ and \$2 an hour, sometimes forced to work weekends.

Outrage at Trayvon Martin injustice

Los Angeles marches

Los Angeles—On July 13, when the media announced that the jury had found George Zimmerman—who stalked and murdered an unarmed Trayvon Martin as he walked home on the night of Feb. 26, 2012—not guilty in Sanford, Fla., people started gathering at Leimert Park in the Black community to address their anger. There were gatherings at Leimert Park for the next four days.

On July 14, 200 to 300 Mexicans, other Latinas and some whites, Asians and Blacks gathered in the Boyle Heights Mariachi Plaza for justice for Trayvon Martin. Next to the speakers’ podium was a large photo of Trayvon Martin with the words, “We are all Trayvon,” with flowers and candles in front of the photo. A Mexican woman said many women are in tears because their children are either killed or imprisoned.

On July 20, the national day of Justice for Trayvon Martin, 500 to 800 protesters—mostly Black, but also white, Asian and Latino—gathered at the downtown Federal Building, with banners and T-shirts: “Injustice and racism more terrifying than hoodies” and “There must be those among whom we can sit down and weep and still be counted as warriors—Adrienne Rich.”

The organizers led the crowd on a nine-mile march to Leimert Park, where another rally was held. During the open mic, people loudly protested that only those who marched all nine miles were allowed to speak.

—Basho

In Chicago with Emmett Till

Chicago—Thousands of people showed up in downtown Federal Plaza July 20 to protest the racist acquittal of George Zimmerman for Trayvon Martin’s murder. The protest was sponsored by liberal groups and WVON radio, with speakers like Rev. Jesse Jackson and former Alderman Cliff Kelley. But beneath the liberal surface beat a revolutionary heart.

The vast majority of people who attended were Black Chicagoans. The speakers were driven to articulate thoughts and feelings that were widely shared. This included both the calls for economic justice and Fr. Michael Pfleger’s denunciation of historical and contemporary genocide.

Airicka Gordon-Taylor, a younger cousin of Emmett Till, spoke, and the history of Black freedom struggle came right to the fore: “When I heard the verdict I said, Wow! This is what this must have felt like, 58 years ago. All I could think was that the festering sores of injustice were torn open all over again for my family. The wound is still there unhealed.

“This is what it feels like today when they’re trying to abolish our voting rights. This is what it feels like when our substandard school systems and closures are mounting in numbers beyond the 1950s. When our teachers are working in horrible conditions. Lack of technology in communities of color—this is what it feels like. I charge our youth today: Remain vigilant! Remain vocal and visible! Don’t lose your momentum, because the past is now your present! Amadou Diallo, Howard Morgan, Stephon Watts, Oscar Grant, Emmett Till and Trayvon Martin—the past is now your present!”

Trayvon Martin’s murder forced wide recognition of the true nature of U.S. history. Compromise doesn’t even go skin deep—as always, the alternatives remain a revolutionary transformation of this society, or new forms of racist reaction.

—Tim Finnegan

Outpouring in Raleigh, N.C.

Raleigh, N.C.—On July 14, the day after a jury found George Zimmerman not guilty of murdering 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, Black Workers for Justice called for an emergency rally downtown in Moore Square, in economically marginalized southeast Raleigh. About 100 people attended. Community members shared our outrage, grief, frustration, anger and calls to organize.

Two young Black men asked us to remember their friend Shon McClain, an inmate at Raleigh Central prison who had been beaten to death on June 4 by a prison guard. A white woman urged whites to educate friends and family about racial profiling and white people’s responsibility to work to dismantle racism.

The following Sunday the NC-NAACP organized a rally that also began in Moore Square. Up to 3,000 people came to honor Trayvon Martin. One speaker called on people to sit in, occupy buildings, march, rally, protest and organize. We then marched ten blocks to Martin Street Baptist Church, a mostly Black church and a hub of civil rights organizing.

Participants packed in, filling the choir loft, aisles, pulpit and hallways. Hundreds remained outside in the sweltering humidity. People carried signs: “17 and Unarmed,” “End White Supremacy!” “Do I Look Guilty?” “Stop Killing My People,” and “Unjust Laws Kill.”

Black women took the stage to share stories of

their daily struggles to protect their Black sons. One said that when Zimmerman was found innocent, it sent a message to all Black boys that the U.S. legal system deems them worthless. She vowed to tell her children every day that they are beautiful, loved and as good as any other person.

Rev. William Barber, president of the NC-NAACP and lead organizer of the Moral Monday movement in which nearly 1,000 North Carolinians were arrested for civil disobedience at the NC General Assembly over the summer, reminded us that North Carolina also has stand your ground laws. Barber urged everyone to register people to vote and to fight against the onslaught of regressive laws passed in the last legislative session.

Young people are at the forefront of calling for justice for Trayvon Martin. The NC Student Power Union, NC HEAT (Heroes Emerging Among Teens) and other grassroots groups are uniting with workers and community organizations to stop the attacks on education and public services. They are brilliantly making the links among many forms of oppression and the murder of Trayvon Martin. The movement is alive, strong and growing—and this is perhaps the most powerful way we honor Trayvon and move closer to true liberation.

—Josephine Maier

Oscar Grant to Trayvon Martin



News & Letters/David M'oto

Oakland, Calif.—On July 13, some 250 took to the streets of Oakland after George Zimmerman was acquitted of killing Trayvon Martin. As the protest raged late into the night, there was property damage and arrests. The following afternoon an eight-mile march took an unplanned route through West Oakland, swelling to 1,200 at its peak as Black residents from the neighborhoods joined in.

The next Friday a group of clean-cut Black clergymen dressed in suits, i.e., no hoodies, led 150 people on a quiet march, protesting police brutality, from City Hall to the Fruitvale BART station, where Oscar Grant had been murdered, for a candlelight vigil. Mainstream media characterized the first two events as violent, meandering and aimless, while gushing over the clergy-led march as peaceful, orderly and focused.

The racist murderers of Trayvon Martin and Oscar Grant were orderly and focused, but not very peaceful.

—David M’Oto

NYC marches for Trayvon

New York—As the news of the racist verdict on the Trayvon Martin case spread through poor and working class neighborhoods, everyone filled Union Square; soon there were over 8,000 protestors.

People held handmade signs denouncing the verdict. Others had printed signs with the image of a young Black man in a hoodie with the caption “We are all Trayvon.” The most incredible part of the rally was its multiracial and youthful character. Many young white people knew that they also had to take a stand.

Then the march began, with no official permit asked for or granted. Thousands took over Broadway, defying the police and chanting “Whose Streets? Our Streets!” Soon Times Square was also filled with protesters. It grew in size as people from north of Union Square and Times Square joined in.

Eventually the march reached historic 125th St. in Harlem, where the youthful marchers again took control of the streets, although there had already been arrests. Then people headed up Malcolm X Boulevard and rallied at Harlem Hospital. Around 200 continued to the South Bronx and held a rally at the Court House.

What stood out is how the youth took control of the streets and defied Mayor Bloomberg and the NYPD. This was a night for revolutionary youth, for young people sick of a racist system that lets the murderers of young Blacks and Latinos walk free from their crimes.

New York City is no stranger to this. We still remember Ramarley Graham, the Black teenager shot and killed in his own house in the Bronx by a cop last year; we remember Amadou Diallo, the hard-working African immigrant shot 41 times by the hired guns of the NYPD. We have long memories and it’s time for justice to come due.

—M.G.

EDITORIAL

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were a call to deepen the revolution. Millions took to the streets in opposition to Morsi’s rule in demonstrations larger than those that ousted former dictator Hosni Mubarak.

Morsi was narrowly elected in 2012, by a minority of eligible voters, against the unpopular Ahmed Shafik, the last Prime Minister of the hated Mubarak regime. Despite some people’s hopes or illusions, Morsi ruled as the narrow religious sectarian that he is, with anti-woman and anti-labor laws high on his agenda. Nothing was done to address the capitalist crisis at the root of Egypt’s massive unrest. The youth of the Tamarod (Rebellion) movement gathered 22 million signatures in a petition calling for Morsi’s removal—more than all the votes that were cast in his election.

Significantly, the women textile workers of Muhalla al-Kubra joined the massive June 30 anti-Morsi demonstrations. Their strikes of 2006-11 inspired many youth who occupied Tahrir Square in the momentous days of Mubarak’s downfall; strikes that continued during the rule of the military council and the Muslim Brotherhood. The religious fantasies of the Brotherhood never had anything to say to their class, never began to grasp its everyday life and struggles. Strikes spread throughout the economy under Morsi’s rule.

Following Morsi’s overthrow, new strikes have broken out at a number of textile plants: Nasr and Stia Spinning and Weaving companies in Muhalla, Damietta Spinning in Damietta, Misr Spinning and Bayda Dyers in Kafr al-Dawwar. These often overlooked struggles are the living roots of Egypt’s future.

The youth who split from the Brotherhood in support of the Jan. 25 Revolution, which the Brotherhood did not support, were a concrete example of how revolutions change social relations, and why their success is determined by these changes.

VIOLENCE AIMS TO SILENCE REVOLT

The violence of the military and the Brotherhood are designed to prevent these changes. As against the new social relations made imaginable by the Arab Spring, these counter-revolutionary forces aim to stop history in its tracks.

The defeat of Egypt’s Brotherhood theocrats brought hope to similar struggles in Tunisia (where Leftist politicians have been assassinated, and where a new Tamarod youth movement has arisen), Turkey, Iran, and within the ranks of Syrian revolutionaries. The mass chant, “You lied to us in the name of religion!” resonates deeply. The Egyptian generals are acting to usurp this world-historic, international movement.

The generals, now casting themselves in the role of Gamal Abdel Nasser and Egyptian nationalism, are playing to the sentiment felt by many in the opposition that “The army and the people are one hand.” This could not be farther from the truth. The generals view “democracy” as a grab bag of political tendencies to be appropriated for use when needed, to be cast aside when they become dead weight as Morsi did. The “technocrats” they placed in positions of authority have no illusions about this. More important, the masses should have no illusions, even if some Tamarod “leaders” who have attacked the independent revolutionaries of the Third Square (neither army nor Brotherhood) movement are propagating them.

CAPITALISM THRIVES ON ‘STABILITY’

The army-anointed road to new elections and a new constitution, now lit up by tracer bullets and flash grenades, is designed to channel the masses’ revolutionary impulses into a direction safe for capitalism and the military’s power.

Neither religion, nor the military, nor any party can substitute for the self-organization of masses in motion. Only they can not only overthrow the old but deepen the revolution to social revolution that establishes the foundation for a new classless, non-sexist, non-sectarian, truly human society. Until that becomes the banner of the masses, new “representatives”—whether the Brotherhood, the army, or a secular, civilian, liberal leader—will arise to short-circuit the revolutionary process.

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WORLD IN VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

Did humanity shudder? At 3 AM on Aug. 21, the genocidal regime of Bashar al-Assad attacked the Damascus suburbs with deadly chemical weapons. Over 1,300 people, mainly women and children, died.

Most of the victims had been asleep. This is why so many of the dead children were in their pajamas, the babies in their one-pieces.

The scenes of horror were captured by cameras, by cell phones, and broadcast to the world. One little girl in a hospital, Younma, terrified and traumatized by her parents' deaths, could only repeat "I'm alive! I'm alive!" As if she too might be swept into darkness, like the dozens, and then hundreds, of children laid out side by side in makeshift morgues.

This coldly calculated atrocity took place in a number of places simultaneously. The chemical attacks were followed by intense shelling. Initial casualty figures provided by the Local Coordinating Councils included: 400 dead in Zamalka, 300 in Ham-ouriya, 150 in Douma, 150 in Kafr Batna, 75 in Ein Tarma, 105 in Mouadamiyeh and Daraa, 69 in Saqba, 63 in Erbin, 16 in Jisreen, 5 in Harasta.

'RED LINES' THAT OBSCURE GENOCIDE

It wasn't the first time Assad has used these outlawed weapons. But this was the most deadly chemical attack since Saddam Hussein's genocidal massacre of thousands of Iraqi Kurds at Halabja in 1988. (The U.S. government then claimed there was no proof of Saddam's guilt, as Russia and Iran claim today with Assad.)

Assad was emboldened to do this now for a number of reasons. First, despite some recent reporting to the contrary, he continues to lose ground to the opposition. While he tries to carve out a territory between Damascus, the capital, and Latakia on the coast, the greater territory of Syria will never again be his to rule. He can destroy people and buildings from above, but will never again control the liberated countryside. So his regime believes it has nothing to lose.

Second, the lack of response by the U.S. or other powers to the Egyptian military's massacre of Muslim Brotherhood protestors served as a green light to Assad.

Ugandans sue anti-Gay bigot over human rights

U.S. preacher and bigot Scott Lively will have to face charges of human rights violations in a Massachusetts courtroom. The charges were brought under a little-used law called the Alien Tort Statute. Foreign survivors of human rights abuses can sue the perpetrators of the abuses in the U.S.

Lively is best known as promoter of Uganda's "Kill the Gays" bill. His homophobic preaching has led to persecution and death among African Gays. In this he is reminiscent of the U.S. "religious" figures who supported terrorist movements targeting Angola and Mozambique in the 1980s—forerunners of today's fundamentalist terrorists.

The suit is being brought by Sexual Minorities Uganda, supported by the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York.

Under Lively's influence, Ugandan lawmakers

Syria regime's genocidal gas attacks

From the beginning, the Obama administration's "red line" on chemical weapons has been a smokescreen for continuing genocide. Why would victims of chemical weapons be qualitatively different to the U.S. government than the tens of thousands who died during the months of peaceful protest, or the 100,000-plus who have died since the Syrian Revolution began?

Finally, the presence of UN inspectors sent the message that the UN—with Assad's patron, Russia, holding Security Council veto power—would do nothing to support the Syrian people. Inspectors were mere miles from the site of the chemical attacks, confined to their hotels. In fact, their mandate to investigate anything has been extremely limited.

RHETORIC, REALITY AND REVOLUTION

The sheer depravity of the Assad regime's actions will compel at least a rhetorical re-

sponse from the U.S. administration, the EU, and the Arab League, among others. Putin's Russia, Iran, and others will respond, and for many reality will disappear in the face of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," like so many discussions of Syria.

The idiocy and futility of this is revealed by those Western Leftists now being promoted by the Iranian regime's PressTV, from George Galloway ("Israel and al-Qaeda did these attacks") to neo-Stalinists of the Workers World Party. Such discredited spokesmen only show the weakness of the Iranian rulers' position.

But the Syrian Revolution has revealed the real structure of our world. In Syria, the world-historic freedom movement of the Arab Spring confronts directly the entire oppressive state-capitalist order. From Moscow to Tehran, Riyadh to Washington, Beijing to Brussels, there has been the keenest interest—but no real aid to the revolution.

THE NATURE OF IMPERIALISM

All capitalist powers share an interest in controlling labor at the point of production. This is why contending imperialisms can find common interests. Assad's violence is an intensified version of the strike-breakers' clubs, the prison yard's rifle tower, and the

armored police assault clearing the streets.

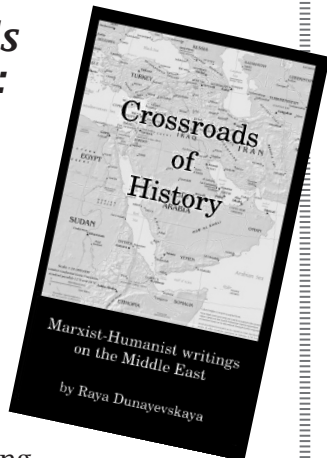
The mass murders in Damascus are meant to declare that this world of injustice and oppression is humanity's permanent state—to instill despair. But it was the rejection of despair, the assertion of human dignity, that began the Arab Spring in 2010, and opened a path to grasping revolution in permanence as the needed goal. If we seem to have arrived back at the beginning, in this sense, we also know our tasks much better.

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Latin America in view

Ecuador—Oil drilling in the Yasuni national park of the Amazon is likely to begin after a proposed \$3.6 billion fund failed to draw substantial donations from developed countries. The idea, proposed by the government of President Rafael Correa, was to solicit funding to *not* drill for oil, thus preserving this natural biosphere and not contribute additional greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. With only \$12 million raised, Correa has canceled the initiative and will open the area for drilling. The hopes of environmentalists proved no match for the "logic" of capitalism's voracious appetite for production and more production fueled by oil. Correa, as with many "progressive" leaders, is under the sway of "developmental-ism."

Brazil—Rapes in Rio de Janeiro, including public ones, have been a horrid fact of life, drawing little notice or investigation by the police and governmental authorities. It is overwhelmingly poor working-class women who are victims, whose protests are ignored. Only the public rape of a U.S. woman drew the attention of authorities, who tracked down the assailants. It turned out they had previously raped a working-class Brazilian woman. When she went to the police, nothing was done. Brazil, which prides itself on female equality, with a woman president and other women in high positions, is a deeply classist society as well as a misogynist and race-determined one.

Mexico—Escuelita Zapatista (little school) has just completed its first course, with hundreds of Mexican and international activists spending five days in Indigenous communities in Chiapas, living, working and learning "the Zapatista meaning of freedom." In addition, there were live video conferences every day, broadcast internationally, with the presence and voice of Indigenous women and men explaining Zapatista autonomy, the rights of women in their communities, resistance to the government authorities, authentic participatory democracy, and the Zapatista system of justice.

—Eugene Walker

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

News & Letters was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcat strikes against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signaled a new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. *News & Letters* was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910–1987), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, became Chairwoman of the

National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907–83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker's Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya's works, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* (1958), *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973), and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx's Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa.

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels. In light of the crises of our nuclearly armed world, it becomes imperative not only to reject what is, but

to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a new Humanism and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as Marxist-Humanism. This is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*.

Dunayevskaya's philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya's original 1953 philosophic breakthrough

and her final 1987 Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party "to lead." We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our *Constitution* states: "It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor." We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking. Send for a copy of the *Constitution* of News and Letters Committees.

NEWS & LETTERS

THEORY / PRACTICE

“Human power is its own end”—Karl Marx

Vol. 58 No. 6

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2013

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WORKSHOPTALKS

Job makes us sick

by Htun Lin

On Sept 19, Kaiser Permanente and the Coalition of Kaiser Permanente Unions jointly announced the launch of the “Total Health Incentive Plan,” touted as a new way to encourage “employees to make their own health a priority, while building a culture of health in the workplace.” It is part of a corporate trend with Fortune 500 companies, known on Wall Street as total wellness programs, with penalties imposed on workers who do not comply.

Kaiser imposed added staff cuts in the same breath as it announced the Total Wellness campaign. While it is promoted as voluntary, the program hides the reality of the health of workers and patients sacrificed daily in the name of cost efficiency.

Management claims its “regional approach to incentives designed to encourage employees to adopt more healthy lifestyles” will make “individuals more likely to participate, removing the fear of being singled out about their health.” Yet individuals are already singled out by the existing attendance policy, endorsed by the union.

Workers realize they risk their own health and the health of their patients when they come to work sick. Yet workers are called into disciplinary meetings when they exceed the company set limit in the number of sick days. It doesn’t matter if your absences have been approved by your doctor.

Kaiser blames individual workers for their own
continued on p. 3

EDITORIAL Tea Party wrecks havoc

The world’s biggest economy, belonging to the sole superpower, was pushed to the brink of disaster in mid-October. Having already forced a shutdown of the federal government, Tea Party Republicans in Congress threatened to trigger a default on U.S. debt through a refusal to raise the debt ceiling before Oct. 17. That could have sent the world economy into an abyss deeper than the 2008 financial collapse. Only at the last minute on Oct. 16 did House Speaker John Boehner allow a vote to open the government and raise the debt ceiling. Even then a majority of House Republicans voted for risking a global economic collapse.

CAPITALISTS FEAR WORKERS’ REVOLT

That a minority faction of one party in one chamber of one branch of the U.S. government could pose a grave threat to the world economy reflects the depth of the capitalist crisis. The sheer nihilism of that Tea Party faction reflects the depravity of American racism, which, as Patrick Buchanan threatened, would not hesitate to “bring down like Samson” the world around it. That the capitalists would allow them to risk so much reflects their greater fear of revolt by workers and other forces as living conditions fail to rebound from the depths of the Great Recession.

The 16-day shutdown’s impact went far beyond the much publicized closure of national parks and monuments. The lives of 800,000 furloughed “non-essential” government workers were turned upside down, as well as those relying on the many crucial functions they perform. There were delays in tracking down contaminated chicken that resulted in over 300 victims of salmonella poisoning, and some public health workers had to return to work. Environmental protection and health research, including experimental and possibly lifesaving medical procedures, shut down. Some states

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ONLINE: www.newsandletters.org

The Syrian Revolution as the test of world politics

by Gerry Emmett

“What is happening in Syria isn’t a civil war based on religion. It’s a revolution of Syrians who want their freedom and dignity.”—Syrian Rebel Youth, Oct. 9, 2013

On Aug. 21 the genocidal regime of Bashar al-Assad murdered over a thousand civilians, mostly women and children, with sarin gas in the Damascus suburbs of Eastern Ghouta. It committed this crime in full view of the world—images of hundreds of murdered children, still in pajamas (the attack came at 3 AM), laid out in temporary morgues, shocked viewers across the world.

Since April 2011 the world has looked on as over 115,000 Syrians have been killed, and over 7.2 million have been made refugees. When Assad’s regime resorted to illegal chemical weapons, it seemed to many that this would change. It seemed that the images of so many murdered innocents might compel some action.

For a moment many in Syria felt hopeful. But far from the briefly threatened U.S. or French military strikes, which were pre-announced to be minimal and “not game changers,” the U.S. and Russia ended up proposing a deal whereby Assad would turn over his supplies of chemical weapons and in turn be allowed a chance to stay in power. This deal underlines the great powers’ preference for “stability,” however brutal, over the relative threat of freedom and self-determination.

Assad had indeed crossed a “red line” with his sarin gas attack, but the U.S. response was intended to send other messages. It was meant to convey that the Syrian “crisis” would be managed by the big powers, the U.S. and Russia. It was meant to tell other regional powers not to cross other lines, such as the development of Iranian (or Saudi) nuclear weapons, or perhaps an Israeli strike on Iran. Above all it was meant to tell the Syrian people that revolution wasn’t on the agenda.

CRISIS MANAGERS, STAGE MANAGERS

Opposition to the Syrian Revolution has been consistent, from the early days of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton terming Assad a “reformer,” through the U.S. refusal to arm the Free Syrian Army even as the Russians and Iranians armed Assad, to this joint effort to treat the revolution as a crisis to be managed.

The public first learned of the proposed deal on Sept. 9 through an alleged “gaffe” by Secretary of State

John Kerry. When asked how Assad might avoid air strikes, Kerry replied, “He could turn over every single bit of his chemical weapons to the international community in the next week. Turn it over, all of it, without delay, and allow a full and total accounting for that.”

This was almost immediately accepted by Assad and his patron, Russian President Putin, and formalized by the UN Security Council. In fact, it was not a spontaneous gaffe but a deal that had been hatched in discussions between Presidents Obama and Putin at the G20 Summit in St. Petersburg the week before. Far from being clumsy, as many pundits tried to claim, this was an artful way to misdirect attention from

the sheer unprincipled nature of such an agreement.

The lack of principle was underlined by Kerry’s subsequent praise for Assad’s compliance with the UN Resolution. Apparently the images from Ghouta hadn’t been seared on his mind.

The Syrian National Council, the external face of the revolution which has been promoted by the U.S. and regional powers, is being coerced and more or less subtly threatened to play along—the end envisioned being an all-parties peace agreement leading to a transitional government. Differences between the U.S., Russia, and other powers however mean that no actual solution is in sight.

THE REVOLUTION LIVES!

What has shown itself in opposition to the Syrian Revolution is the reactionary essence of the state-capitalist world as a whole. In struggling for freedom and dignity the Syrians have had to fight on many fronts; they have come into conflict with every reactionary force the world can muster. It is as brutal and unfair a burden as that borne by the Paris Communards of 1871 who also faced all the might of an oppressive old order.

Nevertheless the struggle has continued. In liberated areas the Local Coordination Committees have continued to function. Peaceful demonstrations expressing the original goals of the Revolution are held across the country, including in areas still under regime control. The majority of Syrians continue to hold to the anti-sectarian, democratic ideals that brought millions out into the streets.

The armed struggle, which only arose in response

continued on p. 10

Deadly South African evictions

Durban, South Africa—Two young women were shot in the back in Cato Crest on Sept. 30. They were both shot while running from the police. Nqobile Nzuza was shot in the back and in the back of her head and died on the scene. Luleka Makhwenkwana was shot in her arm, also from the back, and was taken to hospital but has now been discharged.

The police have said that the protest organized by the Cato Crest comrades was not a protest—that it was a criminal act. It is clear to us that our presence, as the autonomously organized poor, as the strong poor, on the streets of the rich, is taken as automatically criminal by the police.

It is also clear to us that many people in the media share this view. We have been made to look like a dangerous threat to society when we have killed no one, harmed no one and destroyed no one’s home.

KILLERS IN CHARGE

At the same time three activists from Cato Crest have been murdered since March and two others have been shot, and one remains currently in hospital, yet

the people responsible for this are allowed to show themselves as the custodians of “law and order” and the Constitution.

The police have a long history of trying to prevent us from marching, attacking our peaceful marches and refusing to intervene while we are under violent attack from the African National Congress (ANC) or the Land Invasions Unit demolishing our homes in violation of the Constitution, the Prevention of Illegal Eviction Act and court orders.

WOMEN SHOT IN THE BACK

We have taken time to meet with people who witnessed how Nqobile was shot in the back. People began to gather at around 3:30 AM at Bellair Road. When comrades realized that the police were blocking their way they diverted their route to Harcombe Gardens. This road cuts into the big middle-class houses full of light, clean and clear.

The police drove straight to a group of about 400 comrades. They stopped abruptly, got out of the vehicles and immediately drew their guns out. It was around

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[flickr.com/photos/syriafreedom/6956357617](https://www.flickr.com/photos/syriafreedom/6956357617)



One of the many peaceful demonstrations in Syria that continue to take place across the country. This one is in Binnish.

WOMAN & REASON

Sudan's Arab Spring

Christian Nation

by Terry Moon

After Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia set himself on fire in protest on Dec. 17, 2010, Al-Amin Moussa Al-Amin followed suit, setting himself ablaze on Jan. 23, 2011, in the Sudanese city of Omdurman. In this way the Arab Spring reached Sudan after people voting in a referendum decided that South Sudan would become independent of Sudan. Like Bouazizi, Al-Amin was protesting corruption, harsh living conditions and poverty. And, like the practice of the Arab Spring in other countries, women made sure they participated in the uprisings.



Nuba Mountain feminist activist Jalila Khamis

WOMEN TAKE THE INITIATIVE

Women not only were a part of all the protests, but also took the initiative. On June 17, 2012, women at the University of Khartoum began a peaceful protest against a severe rise in food and gas prices and an end to subsidies of vital commodities. When their protest spread to the whole campus, they were brutally attacked and beaten by the police. The next day, the protests leapt to neighborhoods and then other major cities and continued for days with students shouting, “No, no to high prices,” and “The people want to overthrow the regime.”

Since the revolt in the first month of 2011, protests are continuing to break out and most are violently suppressed by the regime of Omar al-Bashir, president since 1989, who imposed Sharia law and abolished political parties in 1990.

On Sept. 23, revolt again broke out, this time over the ending of government subsidies on fuel and cooking gas. As reported by Radio Dabanga (<http://allafrica.com/stories/201309240632.html>): “[T]hundreds demonstrations’ started from El Deim popular neighborhood, led by women shouting ‘down with the regime.’ They were surrounded by the security men after Amarat Street was closed. Witnesses told Radio Dabanga that a number of the women were arrested.”

NUBA WOMEN PART OF THE STRUGGLE

Nuba Mountain women too are part of the struggle. The Nuba people are in limbo when it comes to being part of either South Sudan or Sudan. Since June 2011, Sudan has escalated its attacks on the Nuba. It

has bombed civilian areas, forcing thousands to flee, many of whom now live in mountain caves, refugee camps or Sudanese cities, including many thousands in Khartoum.

After war broke out, feminist and peace activist Jalila Khamis proclaimed on a YouTube video: “The children and women of Nuba Mountains are very tired. I call to the international community to stop the bombing and war in Nuba Mountains now!” For this she was beaten and thrown into a Sudanese jail where she was held for nine months without a trial, facing charges that could have led to a death sentence. Free now, she and other Nuba women and men are continuing the fight.

In the latest uprising that started in September, over 160 protesters including women and high school students have been shot dead by the military and many more have been injured. Women Living Under Muslim Laws report that most “were found to have been shot in the chest or head....Women are increasingly on the frontline during the protests in Sudan. Since 2009 there has been a surge in the women’s rights movement which started when Sudanese women human rights defenders went out into the streets to protest against the policies of the al-Bashir government and his political Islamist allies.”



Amira Osman Hamed, who refuses to wear a headscarf

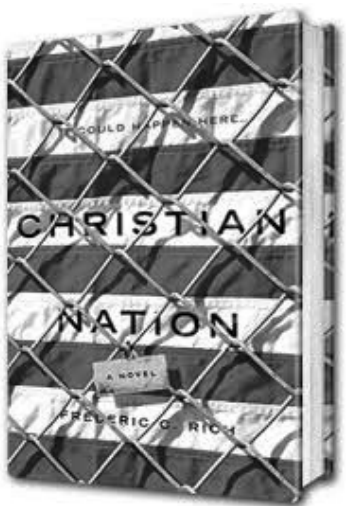
One of those protesting is feminist Amira Osman Hamed, who was arrested on Aug. 27 for refusing to wear a headscarf. She will go on trial as we go to press and, if convicted for “indecent dress,” could be sentenced to 40 lashes, even though flogging is against the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, which Sudan signed. Hamed, who had also received a fine for wearing trousers in 2002, said: “I am a Muslim woman but I will not cover my head. A piece of cloth should not determine my spirituality.” She wants to call attention to this misogynistic law that is enforced primarily against poor and vulnerable women.

These struggles together reveal that women are not only fighters in these battles to overthrow al-Bashir, but they are also determined to continue the great tradition of women of the Arab Spring: to make sure that their revolution does not stop until all human relationships are transformed.

1. A TITLE OF PUBLICATION: NEWS & LETTERS 2. PUBLICATION NO. 385420 3. DATE OF FILING: Sept. 10, 2013. 4. ISSUE FREQUENCY: Bi-monthly. 5. NO. OF ISSUES PUBLISHED ANNUALLY: 6. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: \$5.00 7. LOCATION OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 228 S. Wabash, Rm 230, Chicago, IL 60604. 8. LOCATION OF THE HEAD-QUARTERS OR GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHERS: 228 S. Wabash, Rm 230, Chicago, IL 60604 9. NAMES AND COMPLETE ADDRESSES OF PUBLISHER: Olga Domanski and Franklin Dmitryev (Co-National Organizers), 228 S. Wabash, Rm 230, Chicago, IL 60604. MANAGING EDITOR: Terry Moon, 228 S. Wabash, Rm 230, Chicago, IL 60604. 10. OWNER: News & Letters, an Illinois Not-For-Profit Corporation, 228 S. Wabash, Rm 230, Chicago, IL 60604 11. KNOWN BONDHOLDERS, MORTGAGEES AND OTHER SECURITY HOLDERS OWNING OR HOLDING ONE PERCENT OR MORE OF TOTAL AMOUNT OF BONDS, MORTGAGES OR OTHER SECURITIES: None 12. EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION:			
	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Mo.	Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date Preceding 12 Mo.	
A. TOTAL NO. COPIES PRINTED:	4000	4000	
B. PAID CIRCULATION			
1. Paid/Requested Outside-County Subscriptions	2039	2167	
2. Paid In-County Subscriptions	23	25	
3. Sales through dealers, carriers, street vendors, counter sales	135	157	
4. Other classes mailed through USPS	1460	1301	
C. TOTAL PAID AND REQUESTED CIRCULATION:	3657	3650	
D. FREE DISTRIBUTION (by mail or outside the mail)			
1. Outside-county	35	39	
2. In-county	4	9	
3. Other classes	5	2	
4. Outside the mail	0	0	
E. TOTAL FREE DISTRIBUTION	44	50	
F. TOTAL DISTRIBUTION	3700	3700	
G. COPIES NOT DISTRIBUTED:	300	300	
H. TOTAL	4000	4000	
I. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	98.81%	98.65%	

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Christian Nation: a Novel, by Frederic C. Rich, is a work of speculative fiction set in 2029, when the main character Greg writes a memoir of how the religious Right took over the U.S., turning it into a brutally totalitarian state. The narrative becomes alternative history in 2008 with Barack Obama losing the Presidential election to John McCain, who soon dies.



Sarah Palin, who was made McCain’s running mate to attract religious Right voters, becomes President. The fact that Palin is a Dominionist—someone who believes fundamentalist Christians need to make the U.S. a theocracy—is the tipping point that allows the religious Right to, as Rich puts it, simply “do what they said they would do.”

Much of the novel is Greg’s recounting of the real-life legislation the religious Right passed or attempted to pass before 2008. His friend Sanjay becomes increasingly alarmed over these attempts to change government and culture, discussing the significance of each one with Greg. Greg’s girlfriend Emilie is dismissive of Sanjay’s concern, representing those who ignore the religious Right or don’t believe they really mean what they say because it is so outrageous.

YOUTH IS KEY TO RELIGIOUS RIGHT

Rich explains through the characters that reactionary political takeovers happen slowly, like how small tectonic shifts eventually lead to earthquakes. They only require a fanatical minority of people to lead an indifferent majority. He describes how home schooling and the fundamentalist law school Patrick Henry College are means of indoctrinating this minority and placing them in political positions of power. He also explains the notion of “Generation Joshua,” that today’s youth will bring down secular democracy in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ.

The religious Right motivates this generation with increasingly violent rhetoric, claiming that fundamentalists are oppressed by secularists, while making inroads into the military. Anti-intellectualism is promoted through the teaching of simplistic, anti-scientific notions such as creationism and Biblical inerrancy. Anti-intellectualism is also valued as an asset for “common person” politicians such as Palin.

The purpose is to make people reject critical thinking in favor of believing what they are told. This is necessary for the success of Reconstructionism—the notion that supposedly God-given and perfect Biblical law should replace mere human democracy. Most people are not aware of the brutality of Biblical law, and Rich describes it being instituted when the religious Right takes over.

FEMINIST CRITIQUE IS MISSING

This novel is an excellent introduction to the religious Right’s tactics and thought process. Rich does leave out the insight of feminists that the religious Right’s objection to reproductive and LGBT rights is part of their obsession with restoring patriarchy, which promotes a hierarchal mindset.

While he describes their infiltration into government, education, and the media, he is not explicit about their doctrine of “Spiritual Warfare.” According to this doctrine, these three are among the “Seven Mountains” of culture that must be conquered, which also include arts and entertainment, family, business, and religion.

He does describe the devastating economic and political impact of the new Christian nation on the rest of the world, but neglects the fact that the religious Right wants to take that over too.

Rich includes a brief, interesting section on how the inhabitants of a besieged Manhattan use all their space for urban agriculture and create an almost self-sufficient, crime-free society, apparently without capitalism. He also describes how the resistance movement uses a cell system of organization and the preservation of subversive literature to fight a 1984-style society in which the internet and video cameras are used for control. However, the novel does not offer many suggestions on how to fight the religious Right in the present day other than having its fictional organization “Theocracy Watch” attempt to educate the population about them. But, the novel itself is an important tool in doing just that.

—Adele

Readers: We want to hear from you! Write to us or email! See contact information, p. 11.

WOMENWORLDWIDE

by Artemis

In 2009 in England, Suw Charman-Anderson started the first annual Ada Lovelace Day by asking 1,000



bloggers to discuss women who, like Lovelace, the first computer programmer, excelled in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields but did not receive the credit they deserve. This Oct. 15, the fifth annual Ada Lovelace Day was celebrated worldwide by

feminist groups, universities, and bloggers with conferences, educational and artistic projects, and editing sessions to create, correct, or improve internet articles about influential women scientists. This is part of a trend in feminism of encouraging women’s interest in STEM careers that fortunately seems to be replacing the trend of rejecting science as patriarchal.

* * *

In September, 64-year-old Diana Nyad became the first person to swim from Cuba to Florida without a shark cage. She made the first of four unsuccessful attempts in 1978 and stated she succeeded now due to her mottoes of “find a way” and “never, ever give up.” Hundreds of people lined the beach for the completion of the nearly 53-hour swim because they were inspired that “Life is not over at this age by any means” and “I’m more of a human spirit story than a sports story.”

* * *

The feminist activist group FEMEN—founded in 2008 to promote equality in the Ukraine, with newer branches in Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America—demonstrates for causes such as abortion access and the separation of religion and state. Other feminists have accused it of paternalism in attempting to rescue rather than ally itself with sex workers and women in fundamentalist Islamic cultures. Its demonstrations all involve topless, conventionally attractive young women calling themselves “Sextremists,” yet they protest sexual exploitation. The group admits this had been the policy of a former male leader. While its members face violence from police, legal prosecution for desecrating religious symbols, and alienation from their families, they have been accused of receiving salaries and having no real impact.

BART workers forced to strike

Oakland, Cal.—“One day longer, one day stronger!” shouted a transit worker to kick off a noon rally on Oct. 18 at Oakland’s Lake Merritt BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) station. SEIU (Service Employees Int’l Union) Local 1021 and ATU (Amalgamated Transit Union) Local 1555 had shut down the trains shortly after midnight.

BART officials and the unions announced a settlement late Monday night, Oct. 21. Terms of the settlement were not made public before ratification by the rank and file. Till workers see the agreement, the big worry will be what work rules did the unions give away.

The strike would have started four days earlier had the unions not held out hope that managers would eventually come to their senses. But, as one worker remarked, every time union negotiators eased up, management countered with a position they knew union reps would reject.

For instance, when only two or three points remained unresolved, the unions suggested they be resolved through binding arbitration. BART agreed only on condition that all points, not just a few, be reviewed and settled by the arbiter, a move that could have made months of grueling marathon negotiations all for nought.

Many of those points were not about pay increases, but working conditions. BART has yet to address employee complaints of rat-infested breakrooms reeking of urine. Numerous reports of sexual harassment have been met with silence.

Safety issues such as security for passengers and station agents get scant attention, as do workplace hazards. On Saturday Oct. 19 two BART employees in-

specting tracks were struck and killed by a train operated by a non-union trainee under management direction.

BART officials reluctantly admitted they were training managers to operate trains during strikes. Officials equally reluctantly returned to the bargaining table after the two deaths from their strikebreaking plan had been publicly exposed.

Before details of the tentative settlement could even be made public, so-called progressive California politicians had vowed to take away the legal right to strike from union workers at BART, in the name of protecting the riders. —D.M.



News & Letters / David M'Otto

AFL-CIO redefines labor movement

Detroit—At the AFL-CIO convention, held for four days beginning Sept. 7 in Los Angeles, there were new elements that greeted the convention delegates. Many new and impressive posters towered over those present; there was an emphasis on social networking, and resolutions passed that departed from the usual themes of the past.

The first thing that greeted the delegates when they went through the convention doors were booths staffed by young people to inform the delegates about using Facebook and Twitter. This introduction pre-saged the content of the rest of the convention to reflect changed realities, modernity and the need to adopt new perspectives and goals.

The primary thrust for all of this was articulated by AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka, who outlined a review of the deficiencies of past practices and projected an entirely new view of what was needed to “put movement back into the labor movement.” Central to this, he said, is to open membership of the AFL-CIO to others who are not members of unions but share the same objectives.

This perspective was evident in the convention invitations to groups like the NAACP, National Organization for Women, the Sierra Club, the National Council of La Raza, Moms Rising, and a variety of other labor-oriented councils and youth groups.

Just how non-AFL-CIO members would be incorporated, and if they would be required to pay dues, has yet to be decided. But the aim of this effort is clearly to increase the membership of the AFL-CIO, which consists of 57 labor unions whose membership has been steadily declining. That reflects the fact that unions in the private sector have dropped to just 6.6% of the workforce, down from over 33% at the height of a vital labor movement in the 1940s and 1950s.

The delegates redefined the labor movement as more than union members. They passed a resolution to include within the labor movement all workers who are fighting to improve their standard of living. They elected Bhairavi Desai, the woman executive director of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, to the AFL-CIO executive council. They elected Tefere Gebre, a Nigerian immigrant, as executive vice president, the number three position in the union.

It remains to be seen if the building of coalitions will produce results. While many initiatives of the union were applauded, there were several criticisms of the lack of any nuts and bolts issues of workers on their existing working conditions. Only one report was devoted to the vital areas of speed-up, discrimination, safety and harassment.

The deplorable condition of the organized labor movement is due primarily to the past failure of the union bureaucracy to provide the militant leadership reflecting the fighting spirit of the rank-and-file workers. This huge separation between the workers and the union bureaucracy is today so large that many workers see the bureaucracy as the enemy rather than protector.

For decades the bureaucracy has become more identified with the corporations than the aspirations of the workers. That has resulted in the opposition of the workers to their so-called leadership and the tragic decline of the labor movement in the nation.

—Andy Phillips

‘Legalize my parents!’

Los Angeles—On Sept. 22, 4,000 demonstrators, mostly Mexican immigrants, workers, their families and supporters representing “Millions of Voices for Immigration Reform,” marched through downtown demanding immediate immigration reform and a path to citizenship. They marched to stop ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids, detentions and deportation, to stop their being criminalized. “We are law-abiding working-class people that contribute to U.S. society.” Present immigration policy separates parents from their U.S.-born children by detaining and deporting them. Under the Obama administration two million immigrants have been deported.

Immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala gathered at Broadway and Olympic, then marched over a mile to Grant Park where speakers addressed the demonstrators. Some of the banners and signs read: “Stop the detention and deportations, immigration reform with a path to citizenship NOW!”; “Legalize my parents,” with eight children holding the banner; “Union of Ex-Braceros”—workers brought in legally to work in the fields but without any rights.

Surprisingly absent were many community groups who have marched in the yearly May Day immigrant workers’ marches, along with union members.

Congress’ proposal for immigration reform has a path to citizenship that takes 13 years through a punitively stringent process. It invites young migrants to join the military as a path to citizenship. It pours \$47 billion into militarizing the border, including drones, and its detention centers are actual prisons run by private corporations.

The immigration bill also includes a new guest worker bracero program. This version of “immigration reform” benefits capital production more than undocumented workers, and is far from a compassionate immigration reform bill. —Basho

Detroit workers fight for jobs and pensions

Detroit—Just one day after Detroit Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr announced changes to city workers’ pensions and healthcare benefits, printed booklets arrived in the mail detailing them. Though Orr’s filing for bankruptcy for Detroit is still undergoing legal challenges, the benefits changes have clearly been long planned.

All workers below the age of 65 will no longer be offered health plans. Instead they will receive an extra \$125 per month to purchase their own coverage. Medicare eligible retirees will be offered “Medigap” plans. HMO plans will be free, but a premium will be charged for broader coverage.

Current employees’ pensions will be frozen, and no pensions offered to new hires. Aggressive efforts to reduce the city payroll by outsourcing jobs to private contractors will continue. The plan to turn the Water Department into a “public-private” entity includes eliminating 80% of the city workers currently employed there.

In response to the selling off of Detroit by capitalists anxious to profit from other’s misery, alternative visions and activism continue. An example comes from Detroit Public Schools Board of Education member and Mexican-American activist Elena Herrada. She wrote recently: “As a school board member, which is the canary in the mine of Detroit takeovers, I have seen firsthand the abuse of power. There has to be a truth campaign to counter the lies and half-truths piled on us by the media. We need to be in direct contact with each other to bear witness and share stories.

“There are big things coming up in Detroit: the City Council needs all the help they can get from selling what’s left of their souls, so if you can attend their meetings to help ward off the Barclay’s \$350 million that Kevyn Orr is trying to borrow, please do. It’s like someone stole our ID and opened up endless credit cards, sold our homes and is now trying to take out loans in our name. This is like a giant identity theft that the banks are in on....

“The same identity thieves now want to file for bankruptcy so we can’t get pensions long earned and promised, so they can give it to the banks. Having experienced emergency management of the Detroit Schools, I can tell you with absolute certainty that emergency managers do not get us out of debt.

“They got us into millions more debt and closed schools and have students piled up 45 and 50 deep in classrooms....Our educational situation is abysmal due to Emergency Creation brought to us by the state that thinks Black children’s best purpose is to funnel education money to the rich.

“We can beat this looting back if we stay organized and focused. It is hard and can be demoralizing at times, but we have the moral high ground ...We can do this, and we will. See you at the barricades!”

—Susan Van Gelder

WORKSHOPTALKS

continued from p. 1

state of health which in reality is adversely impacted by unsafe work conditions individual workers have little or no control over.

Kaiser bureaucrats were forced to reverse their decision to reduce mental health services through draconian staffing cuts. After so many patients complained of facing increasing barriers to access mental healthcare services, the state of California stepped in with fines and sanctions.

THE COSTS OF AUSTERITY

When management puts austerity and cost-cutting ahead of well-being, individual human beings pay the price. Constant staff cuts to reduce costs create unsafe working conditions.

Workplace injury rates such as falls, back injuries and needle-sticks are constantly monitored to cut costs. But left out of the scorecard are immeasurable chronic stress levels which cause depression, smoking and other addictions, unhealthy eating habits, high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. Instead, management relegates those morbidities to the realm of “culture.” Tragically, suicide has also become part of that culture.

In my last column “Suicide As Revolt,” I discussed a report which detailed an increase in rates of suicides by young migrant hi-tech assembly line workers at China’s FoxConn. But the deep alienation experienced at FoxConn is only the tip of the iceberg.

All across Europe, suicide rates have risen dramatically since the launch of austerity measures imposed by governments in response to the global economic decline following the widespread financial collapse.

Some cuts don’t heal. Depression is on the rise in the U.S. as well. The emergency room where I work has seen a noticeably sharp rise in attempted suicides, especially by the very young and the very old.

“Total Wellness” is not possible in this kind of society. Capitalism separates mental health from physical well-being, deeming only the funds spent on the latter as a part of variable capital, which if possible capitalists would like to reduce all the way down to zero. The truth is neither kind of wellness is possible without healthy human relations based on genuine cooperation.

Karl Marx warned that capitalists know how to take our natural tendency to work collectively, co-opt it, and pervert it towards capital’s bottom-line ends.

‘PUT ME IN, COACH’

I see workers come to work sick, with full-blown flu symptoms, saying, “I didn’t want to be a burden on my co-workers.” Workers know that when they call in sick, they will not be replaced, so they assume the burden of responsibility for management’s failure-by-design.

Capital not only expropriates our labor time as individual laborers, it also appropriates our natural desires and tendencies to work as a collectivity and our profound desire to cooperate with each other.

We need to reclaim not only the value stolen from our labor but the meaning of our own labor before we can embark on a quest towards total wellness for one and all.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF RAYADUNAYEVSKAYA

Editor's note: The review-essay of Paul Mattick's book Marx and Keynes, excerpted here, first appeared in the January 1970 News & Letters. Today's revival of interest in Marx, especially since the onset of the 2008 economic meltdown, includes a significant strain of economism and has revived controversies and issues addressed by Dunayevskaya then.

This* is a most disappointing book. Or perhaps the more correct description would be: a most revealing book. In part, this is due to its sheer length (364 pages), which allows the author (Paul Mattick) to make explicit what, heretofore, as essayist, he left only implicit. But the more fundamental reason for the revelatory character of the book is the *timing*. Ever since the Hungarian Revolution moved the Humanism of Marxism front-center of the historic stage, it has become impossible for *economism* to hide its underlying anti-Marxism.

Thus, though there was no backtracking on the part of Mattick from his wide knowledge of Marxian as well as Keynesian economics, and though the lucidity of his style in book form is as illuminating as it has been these many years in essay form, **the full book-length form, and the timing, revealed a shocking truth: his anti-Leninist obsession is, in reality, anti-Marxism.**

Should this description of a Marxian *economist* sound defamatory, the reader must listen to Mattick himself. The revelation of his rejection of Marx's Humanism is his, not mine. It is he, not I, who is appalled at "the recent vogue of the socialist humanism of the young Marx, who considers the alienation of labor in capitalism a result of the 'alienation of man from his true nature.'" This *unMarxian Marx* well fits the welfare state and can even be used in the ideological war against the ideological Marxism of the state-capitalist adversary" (p. 282, emphasis added).

THE REWRITING OF HISTORY

How like the state-capitalist ideologists calling themselves Communists—as well as today's Trotskyists—Paul Mattick sounds! *His* rewriting of history, no doubt, has different motivations than either those holding state-capitalist power, or hungering to do so. But this does not turn untruths into truths.

It was not the "welfare state," but the Hungarian Freedom Fighters, the *proletarian* revolutionaries, who brought Marx's Humanism from the musty bookshelves onto the world historic stage. It is not "the recent" welfare state ideologist's "use" of the "unMarxian Marx" that has produced the "vogue," but the ceaseless East European revolts, from East Berlin, 1953, to Czechoslovakia, 1968, that keeps Marx's Humanism alive. The "young Marx's" philosophy of liberation became, also, the underlying philosophy of the African Revolutions against Western Imperialism. Nor did Marx's Humanism, in circling the globe, come to a standstill as it reached the so-called welfare states. On the contrary. In reaching the world citadel of the "welfare states," the U.S., the theory of alienation of the "unMarxian Marx," far from "fitting" the welfare state, gave birth to a new generation of revolutionaries, Black and white, who sought and are seeking to uproot it.

Indeed, to come from the sublime to the petty, even the aloof and mature Paul Mattick has been compelled to acknowledge the history-making long life of the now famous 1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts, albeit in a slanderous form.

No doubt the "mature" Marxist *economist* had known of these long before now (1969, the year of publication of his *Marx and Keynes*). No doubt he knew about them long before the very first East European uprising of the East German workers who dared challenge both Russian Imperialism and their own state-capitalist overlords of the productive process. Simultaneously with that movement *from below* in the birthplace of Marx, a few brave intellectuals also confronted the Communist ideologists with Marx's Humanism. This *dual* movement, from practice and from theory, however, had no more effect on Mattick's *economist* interpretation of Marx than the very first discovery of Marx's Humanist Essays in the late 1920s by the great Marxist scholar, Ryazanov. It needed a social revolution as great as October 1917, before it became possible to pry this unpublished heritage of Marx from the vaults of the Second International where they had lain buried since the death of Engels.

In a word, at no time from their first discovery, through the period they made history anew in live class battles, until today, did the authentic voice of Marx— of Marx, not Lenin, of Marx's philosophy of liberation, not of Lenin's theory of the "vanguard party"—cause Mattick to question his

Economism vs. Marx's humanism

economist interpretation of Marx.

On the contrary, instead of facing the reality of his failure to fully comprehend the philosophy of Marx, he stoops to Stalinist-type amalgam-building. The "vogue" of Marx's Humanism, he now dares claim, "fits" the welfare state!

WHAT IS ECONOMISM?

Paul Mattick's presumptuousness in declaring the authentic voice of "the young Marx" to be that of some "unMarxian Marx" has one salutary effect....Now the reader...feels compelled to return to the beginning of the formless book to see *what* is Mattick's comprehension of Marxism.

The first chapter where Paul Mattick deals directly with Marx on Marx's own, not Keynes', foundations is



The Oct. 23, 1956, rally in Budapest at the statue of General Bem, a Pole who fought with the Hungarians in the 1848 revolution, expressed Hungarians' solidarity with the striking Polish workers. This rally touched off the Hungarian Revolution.

Chapter 3, "Marx's Labor Theory of Value." This, and the chapters on "Accumulation and the Falling Rate of Profit" as well as the two chapters on "The Realization of Surplus Value," and "Capitalism in Crises" are the best in the book. Mattick has always written seriously when criticizing Marxists who departed from the "materialism" of Marx. On that point he is even capable of escaping his own narrow economism.

Thus, in taking other Marxian *economists* to task, he writes: "When Marx speaks of the 'law of value' as relating to a deeper reality which underlies the capitalist economy, he refers to the 'life process of society based on the material process of production'" (p. 29). Thus, also, he criticises George Lichtheim for identifying the Ricardian and Marxian law of value while heaping empty praise upon Marx as "the last, as well as the greatest of the classical economists." Mattick comments: "Even though Marx accepted and developed Ricardo's value theory, he was not the 'greatest' of the classical economists, but their adversary" (p. 28).

Here he himself draws a sharp distinction between narrow economism and Marx's concept of the "life process of society based on the material process of production." Nor does Mattick limit his criticism to reformists, but extends it to revolutionary Marxists. Thus, he hits out against Hilferding for reducing Marx's materialist conception of history to the value theory: "...the materialist conception of history is not identical with the labor theory of value. It discusses social development in general, of which capitalism is only a special case" (p. 34).

Nor, Mattick continues, is it "merely a question of conscious as against unconscious regulation" (p. 35). **The law of value, and, inseparably from it, the law of surplus value, applies to capitalist societies and only to them....**

But, while Mattick hits away at reformist and Communist economists, he himself does not break out of economism's confines in the full tradition of the revolutionary Marx who did not separate philosophy from economics *because* his Promethean vision of a classless society united, instead of divided, materialism and idealism into that new human dimension he called "a thoroughgoing Naturalism or Humanism."

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

So foreign, to Mattick, is the integrality of Marx's philosophy of history with his economic categories that he makes a total hash out of Marx's *original* economic categories. Mattick forces into identity Marx's split of classical political economy's category of labor into *abstract* and *concrete* labor, and the further singling out from labor, as activity, its commodity-form of appearance, *labor-power*. Where Marx speaks of the twofold character of labor, Mattick "restates" it as "the twofold character of labor-power" (p. 57).

The obtuseness of Mattick to Marx's philosophic analysis of the all-pervading fetishism of commodity-

form, literally calls for him to make such false identification as if it were, indeed, the commodity rather than the activity which "produces" value and surplus value. The twofold character of the commodity—use-value and exchange-value—is of course only the phenomenal expression, the cover-up of the exploitative relationship at the point of production, all of which Mattick "knows" very well. Then why attempt, with a single stroke of the pen, to do away with the fetishism of commodities by identifying Marx's analysis of labor, as activity, with labor-power as commodity?

Had the mature Mattick followed Marx into the labor process itself, he could not have mixed up "economic categories" and could not have escaped seeing the labor-capital relationship as not only an exploitative one, but also a *perverted* one. Throughout the four volumes of *Capital*, the most mature Marx pounds away at this capitalistic perversion—the reification of labor, the transformation of man into a thing *and* the revolt of the workers against this.

Evidently, for the knowledgeable Paul Mattick, the commodity-form holds no secrets; labor and labor-power may appear synonymous to one who doesn't feel the full weight of the capitalistic *perversion* of subject to object, of man into mere appendage to machine, of the transformation of concrete labor into the abstraction, value.

But Marx, after laboring more than a decade with the exposition of the fetishism of the commodity-form which, on the surface, appeared so simple that all "took it for granted," was still dissatisfied even after the first edition of *Capital* was published in 1867.

It was *only after* the workers had shown themselves anew as creative "Subject," and not merely as exploited "substance," by "storming the heavens" and creating a totally *new form* of workers rule—the Paris Commune; and *only after* Marx himself analyzed this greatest revolution of his lifetime—*The Civil War in France*—that he again reworked that most famous section of Chapter 1, "The Fetishism of Commodities" in the French edition of *Capital*, 1872-75. Only then was he finally satisfied with the simplicity of his answer to the question: Whence the fetishism of commodities? "From the form itself."

The whole point was that not only is the form "fantastic" that makes "social relations appear as material relations between things," but that, under capitalism, that is what "they really are."

Without full comprehension of *this* philosophy, Mattick ends, not only by separating what Marx had united—philosophy and economics—but, inescapably, isolates himself from the voices from below in his era and thus falls prey to Keynes....

The result is that his only "original" category for world economic development of our era is "mixed economy." Even the concept of state-capitalism becomes subordinated to the "theory" of the mixed economy. No wonder he falls such easy prey to the Keynesian "revolution" in economics that he reverses history itself to make it fit the economic theories of Keynes. "Though carried out in the name of Marx," writes Mattick (in referring both to the 1917 Revolution and to the imperialist adventures of present-day Russian Communism, *as well as the African Revolutions** which broke out spontaneously*, totally unconnected with Communism), "the state capitalist or state socialist revolutions would be better described as 'Keynesian revolutions'" (p. 279).

MATTICK'S HOSTILITY TO THE PROLETARIAT

We have no time to waste on exposing such a fantastic turning upside down of actual social revolutions which produced phenomenal changes in bourgeois economics, not to mention Mattick's *retiming* of history so that Keynesian economics, which was not born until the 1930s, nevertheless "fits" 1917. What is of importance is that this has led him to bring into the open, his anti-proletarian "philosophy," which both objectively and subjectively, does indeed fit in with state-capitalism *and* "welfare state" ideologists as well as with all who have departed from Marxism.

Like all of them, Mattick abuses Marx's vision of the revolutionary nature of the proletariat—"The proletariat is revolutionary or it is nothing"—in order to shout loud his hostility to the proletariat: "At present it (the proletariat) is nothing..." (p. 337).

It is this anti-proletarian attitude that is his one true underlying "philosophy," be it in his analysis of Marx whom he is supposed to be following, or of Keynes whom he is supposed to be opposing; be it in his professional anti-Leninism or in his deliberately ambiguous degrading of the African Revolutions. It is this hostility to the proletariat that has caused his self-paralysis every time he faces the integrality of philosophy and revolution.

** For a discussion of the African Revolutions, see my *Nationalism, Communism, Marxist Humanism and The Afro-Asian Revolutions*. For an on-the-spot report directly from Africa, see my *Political Letters*, Nos. 34 thru 39. Both are available through News and Letters Committees.

* *Marx and Keynes, The Limits of the Mixed Economy*, by Paul Mattick (Extending Horizons Books, Boston, Mass., 1969).

ESSAY

Todayness of the Grenadian counter-revolution and the U.S. invasion on its 30th anniversary

by Bob McGuire

Revolution in Grenada caught the world's attention in 1979. The New Jewel Movement, which linked itself to the Black Power movement, had upset Britain's neo-colonialist succession (though Grenada stayed in the British Commonwealth) and appeared to be a beacon for revolutions to follow in the Caribbean.

Ronald Reagan's invasion of Grenada in October 1983 was promoted as more than merely defeating a country the size of Flint, Michigan, by force of arms. His supporters claimed that Grenada put an end to the era of defeatism since Vietnam and turned around the failed Bay of Pigs 1961 invasion of Cuba.

What happened on one tiny island 30 years ago raised issues at the time that transcended the borders of Grenada to the idea of revolution throughout the Caribbean, the Third World and beyond. In place of the post-World War II struggle between the U.S. and state-capitalist Russia, Reagan now asserted single world mastery. He went further than the post-war practice of barely-covert overthrows of populist and socialist governments in Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1956 and Chile in 1973 to claim the right to a state of permanent war.

THE BEGINNING OF THE 'CHANGED WORLD'

Reagan met with resistance to his next target, overthrowing the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. But in Grenada, he permanently altered the stage of U.S. imperialism to what Raya Dunayevskaya called in 1986 "the Changed World." Later, in the name of "anti-terrorism," political opponents of George W. Bush's wars feared failing to endorse them, and avowedly anti-Iraq war Obama felt compelled to continue managing them.

Grenada represented for Dunayevskaya a reason to look back at "30 years of movements from practice that were themselves forms of theory." *Grenada: Revolution, Counter-revolution, Imperialist Invasion* contains Dunayevskaya's lead-editorial for *News & Letters* from December 1983 and her Political-Philosophic Letter of Nov. 28, 1983. (Portions of the pamphlet are available as an appendix to *Frantz Fanon, Soweto and American Black Thought* published in 1986, and as an appendix to John Alan's *Dialectics of Black Freedom Struggles* in 2003.) The original pamphlet contained as well an eyewitness account of the counter-revolution and invasion of Grenada, critical to combating the collective amnesia of much of the Left over events when facts don't fit their narrative.

REAGAN'S RETROGRESSION

From the 1979 revolution on, and particularly after Reagan took office, Grenada had been in the crosshairs of U.S. imperialism. Candidate Reagan in 1979 had declared that "the Caribbean is rapidly becoming a Communist lake in what should be an American pond."

Upon assuming office in 1981 Reagan immediately decreed that it was "morning in America." His words and actions declared that it was morning in *white* America, seizing on racist divisions even within the labor movement.

Reagan immediately crushed PATCO, the union of air traffic controllers, with the nominally left-leaning IAM (International Association of Machinists) as his stooge. The IAM directed their members to cross PATCO picket lines. Crushing the PATCO strike signaled the end of the New Deal era reliance on trade unions as junior partners against the working class, and eased the way toward general union busting.

Continuing his policies of retrogression beyond U.S. borders, how could Reagan not have targeted Grenada? Not just as a revolution in the Caribbean, which, long before Reagan, the U.S. had considered its own lake, but as an avowedly Black revolution, and as a government forming closer ties with Cuba, Grenada was an irritant to Reagan in inverse proportion to its size and military power.

COUNTER-REVOLUTION INVITES U.S. INVASION

The pretext for the invasion of Grenada in October 1983 was the supposed necessity of ensuring the safety of American medical students. But what really gave

Reagan his opening to order an invasion was the counter-revolution within the Grenada ruling Army-Party-State that culminated in the murder of Premier Maurice Bishop. The invasion became the opening chapter of a restoration of Pax Americana.

INNER-CIRCLE MARXISM

Just four months earlier Maurice Bishop, in a June 28, 1983, *Village Voice* interview, hinted at the early influences on leaders of the New Jewel Movement of the writings coming from the Black Power movement, mentioning Frantz Fanon and Malcolm X by name. Bishop alluded to leaders in the early 1970s beginning to take up the "classical socialist works" and moving to a "materialist conception of the world." He famously answered the interviewer's inquiring about the man, Karl Marx, the centenary of whose death was 1983, by saying, "I'm trying not to say his name."

What was said with a laugh had serious bearings on the beginnings of the Grenada Revolution and its end. According to Bishop's account, New Jewel Movement leaders were studying Karl Marx and his successors while working out their relationship to Marxism, including their relationship to Castro. But the party manifesto, issued in 1973 on the eve of independence under the neo-colonialist government headed by onetime labor leader Eric Gairy, shared no such philosophic underpinnings with the workers and peasants of Grenada.

The Manifesto of the New Jewel Movement began with: "All This Has Got to Stop," and concluded the introduction with: "To create the new life for the new man in the society, it is necessary that we reject the present economic and political system which we live under." But the manifesto had not gone beyond stoking dissatisfaction over corruption, prices and a widening gap between haves and have-nots.

The New Jewel Movement was not the first revolutionary group to have one message for the leadership, and another for the people. By mistrusting the masses and hiding full internal debates on revolution, these parties hardly surpass conventional ask-for-your-vote bourgeois politicians.

New Jewel Movement leaders might have thought that the revolution of 1979 under their banner that overthrew Gairy's government, with mass support, vindicated their rigid confinement of the debate on Marxism to an inner circle. In reality, excluding the masses from debating the aims of the revolution left them as taken for granted, and allowed the disagreements among the leaders to degenerate into the worst kind of state-capitalist dead ends.

The rest of the leadership had actually censored Bishop in October 1982, while co-leader Bernard Coard had been stripped of some authority. Yet Bishop and the rest of the New Jewel Movement maintained a public united front, all the while excluding the masses from the private-ly kept disputes of the leadership.

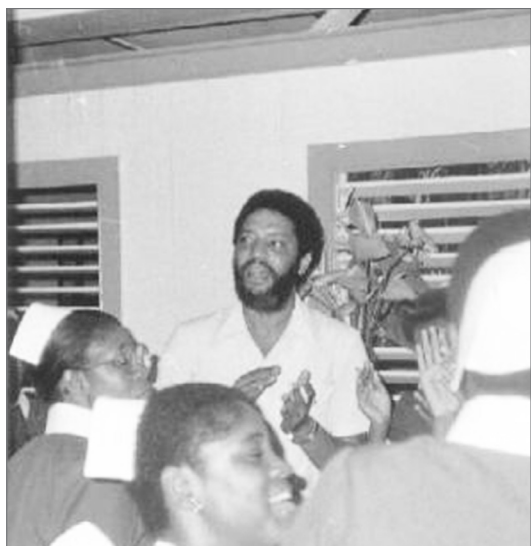
The leadership rift became public knowledge on Oct. 12, 1983, when the army arrested Bishop. Agitation of the masses freed Bishop from jail, but only in time to watch the army under Gen. Hudson Austin fire on the crowd that had liberated him. Bishop responded, "My God, my God, they have turned the guns against the people" before he himself was murdered.

COUNTER-REVOLUTION FROM WITHIN

Bishop had been the New Jewel Movement's popular face to the Grenadian masses. Yet despite their spontaneous intervention to free him after his arrest revealing their involvement in revolutionary thought and activity, he had kept Party disputes within the leadership—disputes that ultimately were settled with his blood and the blood of those killed in the rally at the jail.

Unlike the counter-revolution within the revolution under Stalin after the 1917 Russian Revolution, there was no class basis in Grenada for counter-revolution. Yet in a state-capitalist world, counter-revolution deepened to the point of the shooting of both Bishop and the masses. That counter-revolution took place apart from, and prior to, Reagan's counter-revolutionary interventions.

Grenada had been receiving aid from Cuba, and the model of the Cuban state loomed larger



Maurice Bishop meeting with Grenada's healthcare workers



Poster of New Jewel Movement slogan

than the 1959 Revolution itself. Fidel Castro had spoken after Batista had been toppled, declaring the Cuban Revolution to be a Humanistic revolution. Later, by aligning Cuba with state-capitalist Russia as a counter to the imperialist U.S., Castro had allied with those who since the 1956 Hungarian Revolution had propagandized and acted against the very concept of Marxism as a humanism.

Yet Castro still positioned himself as a supporter of international revolution, from Angola to Bolivia. Cuba's material support for Grenada included not only food and equipment, but also medical and technical personnel.

Castro's contribution to political disputes after the Grenadian Revolution, far from being a theory of revolution, much less Marx's theory of permanent revolution, was confined to the "principle of non-interference in internal affairs."

In Grenada, that meant confining all questions and decisions of revolution to a Central Committee, with the rank and file reduced to muscle—and ultimately, to cannon fodder. Castro praised Bishop for not taking the disagreements among the leadership to the masses.

Castro's "principle" ignored the history of actual revolutionaries: Karl Marx not only included in the International Workingmen's Association revolutionaries of the Paris Commune, including even non-Marxists, but saw to the burial of the IWA when it had ceased to be revolutionary. Lenin had threatened the Politburo in 1917 that he would go over their heads and appeal to the rank and file of the workers and sailors if revolution were not placed on the agenda.

C.L.R. JAMES INVERTS ANTI-VANGUARDISM

For most of the 20th century the Caribbean had been a vital incubator for the African revolutions and for developing Marxist theory. But in the face of the trajectory of the Grenadian Revolution, some theories fell short. Bukka Rennie followed C.L.R. James' form of state-capitalist theory to conclude that, despite the class basis of state-capitalism, in the Caribbean, Caribbean Stalinism and Revolutionary Marxism were not hostile to each other.

C.L.R. James had been co-leader with Dunayevskaya between 1941 and 1955 in the Johnson-Forest Tendency, which had not only projected the organization's critique of Russia as a state-capitalist society, but had been working out new forms of revolutionary organization in place of the discredited vanguard party. But in a 1964 appendix to his study of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins*, James identified Castro with Toussaint L'Ouverture. In 1983 Dunayevskaya found that James had strayed so far from his roots as to justify the army attacking the people of Grenada. He claimed the army was meeting the demands of the masses for leadership.

Dunayevskaya's analysis of Grenada has become more important in the intervening 30 years. In 1983, "experts" like Ramsey Clark rewrote history so as to blame Reagan alone for the end of the Grenadian Revolution, and to whitewash New Jewel Movement Leaders Coard and Austin. After further practice, Ramsey Clark has reappeared in Syria and gone to bat for the butcher Assad.

History shows that it is the task of revolutionaries to make sure that working out a philosophy of revolution involves the revolutionary masses and solidarity across borders, to avert yet more failed revolutions.

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U.S. RACISM AND BLACK AND LATINO STRUGGLES

I read “Racism and the fight against it take center stage in the U.S.,” in the Sept.-Oct. *News & Letters* and need to respond to President Obama’s refusal to act on the racism behind bars, the “disenfranchisement of convicted felons” and the potential hiring of someone like New York City Police Chief Ray Kelly who is strictly against a policy to change the state of racism.

The greatest achievement that came with Obama winning the presidency was the fact that he was an African American. Obama can’t change anything for Black America that ain’t in the program. Were is the international concern for the African plight in America?

Willie Beeville, Texas

“Racism and the fight against it” was rewarding reading, presenting the current situation in the context of the unfinished American revolution, as discussed in Dunayevskaya’s *American Civilization on Trial: Black Masses as Vanguard*. Contemporary gun rights stand-your-ground thinking and vigilante justice as a latter day outgrowth of a post-Reconstruction Southern Jim Crow concept of Law and Order—where white men conducted paramilitary patrols to police the never-ending escapes and rebellions of slaves—was all tied together.

In the context of the history spelled out in *ACOT*, today’s prison system is an outgrowth of a society that was under slave patrols and slavemasters’ summary justice.

Immigrant worker Bay Area

I was raised with racist, immigrant-hating parents and I took their racism as my own. Then I moved to Chicago and started my own trucking company. Lots of the workers the company hired were Black and Latino. They were just the nicest, most honest people I ever met, compared with my parents and the people they hung out with. I was surprised they were not how I was told they would be. They changed my mind about the racism I was taught and now I am free from it.

A changed man Chicago

N&L has been a political tool that I use to help prisoners understand the world we live in. The paper has been one of the many to help keep us up on what’s happening, especially during the current hunger strike here in Pelican Bay. The independent press is essential for a real movement for human rights and justice. Our class enemies realize this—this is why *N&L* was recently censored here. My only suggestion is for there to be more articles about Chicano/as.

Prisoner Crescent City, Calif.

Before the 2012 presidential election, President Obama spoke out in favor of the Dream Act which gives a path to citizenship to undocumented youth who migrated to the U.S. with their parents when children. His position today has been ambivalent as other issues like the debt ceiling have taken priority. But while the Dream Act is on Obama’s back burner, over two million migrants have been deported under his administration. Shame.

Japanese American Los Angeles

LABOR UNDER ATTACK

On Oct. 1, thousands of Los Angeles County social services workers of SEIU Local 721 rallied and marched from downtown L.A.’s financial district to the County Board of Supervisors to voice opposition to the new contract proposal. The old contract expired the day before. They have not had a cost of living increase for the last five years while each social worker’s caseload has dramatically increased. An organizer said the present proposal was unacceptable.

Although it offers a 3% wage increase, workers must pay a larger percentage for healthcare. The net result is a decline in their wages. With that kind of deal, I can’t help but support them.

Retired worker Los Angeles

In 1968 the minimum wage covered 90% of the poverty level. Today it covers only 59%! If the minimum wage kept up with inflation, it would be about \$15 an hour instead of the incredibly low \$7.25. The income gap between the 1% ultra rich and the rest of us is wider now than since the “gilded age” of the 1890s. Workers are mobilizing throughout the country to mark the 75th anniversary of the first minimum wage and to demand a living wage.

Green activist New York City

Capitalism is running out of places to look for lower-wage workers and cheap energy. It paints exploitation as economic development, which translates into substandard living for workers in places like Bangladesh. Here in Los Angeles, a young worker told me she is working 80 hours a week to save money for college. Another told me she works up to 60 hours some weeks. Capital brings with it its own end, which will be when the unemployed and the displaced will rise against capital’s mode of thinking and producing.

Teacher Los Angeles

The U.S. default “crisis” will provide an excuse to cut Social Security, Medicare and other programs that benefit the working class. The ruling elite will not allow the U.S. to default. The Tea Party denizens will be betrayed by the corporate leadership of their Republican Party just as the liberals will be betrayed by the equally corporate leadership of their Democratic Party. As Obama just pointed out regarding the default crisis and the national debt: everything else is up for negotiation, except increased taxes on the ruling elite.

Subscriber New York

Automation in the service sector continues to eliminate jobs. DTE Energy, which provides electricity and gas to Southeast Michigan, is installing outside meters that can be read with an electronic device from a passing vehicle. This will greatly reduce the number of meter readers. A young DTE worker said, “I hope I’ll still be working; I hope they find us other jobs in the company.”

Senior Citizen Detroit

CTA vs. THE HOMELESS

The new “Ventra” card pay system for the Chicago Transit Authority seems designed to rip off riders as much as possible. If you have a problem with the machine and have to cancel a transaction, you don’t get the money, only a receipt, and have to call their service number. It’s going to be hard on the homeless who depend on the trains at night. Having been homeless myself, I know how painful it’s going to be. Chicago contracted out to a California company for this mess, Cubic Transportation Systems Inc., so homeless people who end up frozen this winter will have literally been privatized to death. I told a CTA employee, “I know this wasn’t your idea, but anyone who votes for Emanuel for Mayor again...” She finished my thought: “...they should be shot!”

Formerly homeless Chicago

DISABILITY AND HUMANITY

I’ve just learned about several parents murdering their children with disabilities and it is extremely upsetting. One parent I read about said that they

READERS' VIEWS

“were doing their child a favor” and they “can’t understand what all the fuss is about.” They act like they are entitled to this inhuman act, and more and more people seem to agree with them. Some of these children have the same disabilities as my daughter. It makes me unbelievably sad. I yearn for a new world where all children and adults are cherished as every human being should be. This is one of the reasons Marxist-Humanism is so important to me. It calls for the removal of capitalism and state-capitalism and the working out of a new world for our times.

Suzanne Rose Chicago

ABORTION IS A HUMAN NEED

Working at a clinic that offers abortions is exhausting yet rewarding! No one can possibly understand what it’s like when I am discharging a patient and she says “Thank you.” It’s not about hearing a patient saying those words. It’s about the way she says it. From her heart. It’s her knowing I’m not there to judge her, but instead it’s me being there for her. It’s because for her I was that one person who listened and cared enough to say, “It will be okay,” or, “Trust me, I do understand what you are going through.”



Clinic Worker USA

EGYPT'S CONTRADICTIONS

When the Muslim Brotherhood was elected in Egypt, I thought they were the most incompetent rulers I had ever seen. Instead of uniting Egypt they started killing people. The only thing I had liked about Mubarak was that he suppressed the Muslim Brotherhood. Now the army has taken over and is killing thousands. How did those who created the revolution in Tahrir Square respond to the fact that their enemies, the Muslim Brotherhood, are being murdered in the streets?

Long-time activist Utah

Terry Moon’s column in the Sept.-Oct. *N&L* quoted a lot from Egyptian-American feminist and writer Mona Eltahawy. Eltahawy was in Egypt when the army arrested President Morsi. She is no fan of the Muslim Brotherhood. Yet she took a principled position: the army is not our friend. The army is clever, had been looking for ways to destroy the revolution, and found a popular way to move. The army is conducting a propaganda campaign, calling those who oppose them “terrorists.” It’s divided the revolutionary movement. It’s important to support those like Eltahawy who are opposed to any fascism, be it from religious fundamentalists or secular forces.

Women’s Liberationist Illinois

DETROIT CRISIS

Some young men at the Social Security office told me a man in a suit “gave them some blue shirts with [Detroit Mayoral Candidate] Duggan’s name on it and \$45 to be given to us at 5:30.” All they had to do was walk around and ask people: “Do you live in Detroit?” “If they say yes,” the men continued, “We were to give them some pictures or paper with Duggan’s name on it and say, ‘He will turn Detroit around.’ So we did.” I asked why? They said they did not have any money and they were hungry. Then, they asked, “Who is this white man anyway?” I just said, “A white man who will

make it harder for you, your family and friends.”

Latina activist Detroit

I appreciated the article “Detroit defends homes.” The author describes how the Detroit Eviction Defense Center is a small but growing group, where, she stresses, “We want to pull people in, so that they see others thinking creatively, and begin to talk to each other about how to make their block safer.” I take it she means save our neighborhoods from thugs in three-piece suits with eviction notices, as well as thugs with guns about to mug you. I’m all for real law and order, which comes from the community rank and file.

Renter Northern California

NUCLEAR PERIL

While the U.S. and other Western nations hold Iran’s feet to the fire in terms of stopping the enriching of uranium for nuclear bombs, Chernobyl and Fukushima prove that even nuclear energy is destructive of the earth’s ecology. Two years after the Fukushima reactor meltdown, it is still draining tons of radioactive groundwater into the ocean daily. The process of building nuclear power plants contributes tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. It is *not* a green technology. Decades after the “Atoms for Peace” policy in the 1950s and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signed in 1970 that allows non-nuclear countries to build nuclear reactors, the NPT is irrelevant.

Basho Los Angeles

WHY A NEWSPAPER LIKE N&L?

I really appreciate reading the news from a perspective other than the mainstream media. When I am finished reading your newspapers, I always donate them to one of the library shelves so others can read them. Thank you for your generosity.

Prisoner Ontario, Ore.

I want to thank all at *N&L* as well as the donor that paid for my subscription for making this paper happen for us. What I like the most is that your paper touches on many things that the news on TV does not. And when the TV news does talk about it, it’s all cut down to how “they” want us to see it. But your paper puts it out there for the people the way it is.

Latino prisoner Crescent City, Calif.

The ideas and philosophies expressed within *N&L* are relevant to all international human rights struggles that are being waged against the diabolical empire of U.\$. imperialism. However, for *N&L* to continue to exemplify concrete examples of intercommunalism, it must commit at least an entire section of its paper to report and to receive reports on the human rights struggles within these slave camps so that the humanity of political prisoners, prisoners of wars, activists, etc., can reverberate throughout the world. This way our oppressors’ ability to criminalize our human rights struggles, as was the case with our most recent hunger strike, can be neutralized.

Kijana Tashiri Askari Crescent City, Calif.

Editor’s note: N&L regularly prints reports on and voices from prisoners’ struggles. We invite prisoners—and all others who have broken with the ruling bureaucracies—to send in your views, ideas and reports on struggles for freedom and debates on revolutionary ideas.

SYRIA AND WORLD POLITICS

The recent arrangement regarding the dismantling of Syria’s chemical weapons points to renewed tensions between a resurgent Russia and a U.S. increasingly unsure of how to relate to the opposition movement. The threat of a “limited” strike on Syrian military facilities—without simultaneously formulating an analysis of how this would impact upon Assad’s campaign—reflects the White House’s frustration and lack of confidence with the opposition, which thus far has failed to manifest a political stance conducive to U.S. imperialism’s interests. As long as the rebellion—which started as a secular, pro-democratic movement—retains genuine revolutionary aspirations, the U.S. will always hesitate to assist it, even in the face of the Syrian regime’s brutality.

Revolutionary Britain



Congratulations to Syrian dictator and mass murderer Bashar al-Assad. He has successfully united the Right-wing Tea Party and the Left-wing progressive/liberal/Left against those pesky “terrorists” who thought they could overthrow him and get some international help. He is winning!

Socialist Memphis

How can genocide be justified? Some in the Left justify it the way they always do: by claiming that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. They stop at this first negation. When they can’t bear to look at what they’re really saying, they send former Green Party candidate Cynthia McKinney over there to say she didn’t see any homeless people in Damascus, despite the hundreds of thousands of homeless and internally displaced.

Furious Chicago

●

WARS PAST AND PRESENT

The first Black U.S. president to visit Rangoon (on the “road to democra-

cy”) is also a U.S. president who preaches the spread of an “American tradition,” by supporting two sets of generals from the juntas of Burma and Egypt. This administration refuses to call a coup a coup in Egypt while, at the same time, celebrating General Thein Sein’s media coup by awarding him a White House reception and promises of U.S. trade deals, while Kachin Christians and Rohingya Muslims continue to be slaughtered by helicopter gunships.

From Burma California

Dunayevskaya’s “Detroit 1967: ‘Law and Order’ from the Barrel of a Gun” (Sept.-Oct. 2013 *N&L*), brought in specific details of the movement to reach for the philosophic essence. The kind of thinking allows the reader, not just to read and “absorb,” but to think and see new horizons and connections. One could see key criticisms of Johnson’s war in Vietnam in 1967, as well as the precursors of George Zimmerman vigilantism in 2013. As terror was being spread by endless U.S. napalm bombs in Vietnam, what Dunayevskaya was describing about the terror campaign in Detroit at the same time was not just about Detroit. I hear her philosophic voice bringing in echoes of a similar campaign halfway across the globe.

Asian immigrant Northern California

Glen Greenwald wrote for *The Guardian* about Edward Snowden as a whistleblower. His partner was arrested and interrogated for nine hours before being released. The Egyptian military arrested and detained a Canadian photographer who happened onto the military beating and killing of protesters. They are criminalizing whistleblowers for telling the truth.

Manel Los Angeles

●

PHILOSOPHY AND MASSES

There are endless articles in many Left publications that focus on activity, where theory and philosophy are relegated to a few throwaway concluding phrases. It is presumed that “theory and philosophy” are something the

big-(European)-man of letters does, not workers, youth, women, people of color. These people will act, we will tell them what their practice means. What makes *N&L* precious to me is that philosophy is part of the organic whole. The transcendental is immanent in the kind of empirical detail and the way it is chosen. The universal is in the particular.

Htun Lin Bay Area

One of the most striking things that I have noticed in distributing *N&L* is the interest in Marx. I wore a Karl Marx T-shirt, and a good number of people stopped and asked if *N&L* was a Marxist newspaper and then asked for a copy. One student said, “Anything about Marx interests me”; an older man in the South Bronx asked if I was a Marxist and said he wanted a copy of the paper; a woman and man in the South Bronx, hearing this was a revolutionary newspaper, said that they wanted to read anything about revolution; another woman whose daughter was “in the movement” asked for a copy for her and one for her daughter. It pays to be bold in flying your revolutionary colors.

Michael Gilbert New York City

●

PRISONERS READ & SPEAK

When people ask why I am a Marxist or why I am involved with News and Letters Committees, I simply point to the fences topped by razor wire. I refer them to the amount of money that a prisoner is charged for canteen items, well beyond what people in the community pay. I point to the injustice of a man who—though innocent of the crime—was forced to do 23 years before he was finally exonerated thanks to groups like the Innocence Project. I refer to the self-perpetuation of the system by way of an antiquated, biased parole system governed by a political agenda, rather than one that is truly rehabilitative. *N&L* does not exclude ideas based on who expresses them. Because of this, the depth of the knowledge shared is second to none.

Prisoner Wisconsin

It is always distressing to hear of the banning of written material anywhere. It is especially distressing to hear of it in prisons. Our prison system is so unjust and inhumane; prisoners benefit from knowing what’s happening in the world. *N&L* presents the news from a humanist perspective. So, my heartfelt wish is that it will be allowed again to be distributed among California prisoners, and soon.

Humanist Chicago

Thank you for shedding light on the many struggles of our day, for educating the masses about our responsibilities as human beings, and, lastly, for keeping it real. Your paper has kept me on my feet throughout the years. I did 14 years in solitary confinement/Administrative Confinement. Your paper kept me alive and gave me new ideas regarding the collective betterment and upliftment of my people and all oppressed nationals. Prisoners/Kap-tives make up many of the 99% and your paper, its ideas ranging from the Queer Struggle to the Black Struggle all the way to the prisoner’s struggle, affects our struggle in a tremendous way. Our struggle is one struggle.

Kamau Wisconsin

It is good to hear voices within this publication speak out and state the obvious without disinformation, lies and illusions. Daniel Boorstin, a former Librarian of Congress, once said, “We risk being the first people in history to have been able to make their illusions so vivid, so persuasive, so ‘realistic’ that we can live in them. We are the most illusioned people on earth.” Thank you for printing the facts without illusions.

Prisoner Livingston, Texas

TO OUR READERS: Can you donate \$5, the price of a sub, for a prisoner who cannot pay for one?

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11-12/13

Pelican Bay prisoners suspend their hunger strike

Greetings of Solidarity and Respect!
The PBSP-SHU, Short Corridor Collective Representatives hereby serve notice upon all concerned parties that after nine weeks we have collectively decided to suspend our third hunger strike action on Sept. 5, 2013.

To be clear, our Peaceful Protest of Resistance to our continuous subjection to decades of systemic state-sanctioned torture via the system’s solitary confinement units is far from over. Our decision to suspend our third hunger strike in two years does not come lightly. This decision is especially difficult considering that most of our demands have not been met (despite nearly universal agreement that they are reasonable). The core group of prisoners has been and remains 100% committed to seeing this protracted struggle for real reform through to a complete victory, even if it requires us to make the ultimate sacrifice. With that said, we clarify this point by stating prisoner deaths are not the objective. We recognize such sacrifice is at times the only means to an end of fascist oppression.

Our goal remains: force the powers that be to end their torture policies and practices in which serious physical and psychological harm is inflicted on tens of thousands of prisoners as well as our loved ones outside. We also call for ending the related practices of using prisoners to promote the agenda of the police state by seeking to greatly expand the numbers of the working-class poor warehoused in prisons, and particularly those of us held in solitary, based on psychological/social manipulation, and divisive tactics keeping pris-

Support prison truce

Editor’s note: Alex Sanchez, internationally recognized peacemaker, is a co-founder of Homies Unidos in Los Angeles where he has developed and implemented innovative violence prevention and intervention programs since 1998. He spoke at a rally on Oct. 9 before the joint legislative hearings on solitary confinement in Sacramento.

Thank you to all those here who have someone inside. I know it’s hard to lose someone to the system, to know they are being tortured in there. I myself have been incarcerated, spent time in “the hole,” which is a kind of a security housing unit (SHU) without any access to anything, especially to family. I know what it’s like to get released, to have an opportunity to change your life, to raise your children, to be an asset to the community, to be here, advocating for those who don’t have a voice. There are a lot more families who need to be here and cannot, for various reasons.

In 1992-93 there was a truce among the African-American gangs in Los Angeles followed by a truce among the Latino gangs. It brought down homicide numbers to levels not seen before. Those numbers have never risen to the heights of the 1980s and early 1990s. Today, the numbers are the lowest in 25 years. We know that violence prevention in our communities has to come from people who used to be part of the problem. The Agreement to End Hostilities [issued by Pelican Bay prisoner representatives last year] is that approach. That is the tool to reduce gang violence in our communities. To prevent our young men and women from being lost to a criminal justice system that’s unjust.

On March 9, 2012, taking a cue from 1992-93 Los Angeles, gang leaders in the supermax prison in Zacatecolucas, also known as Zacatraz, in El Salvador made an agreement to stop the violence. They were given support by the prison administration and by the government of El Salvador. Because of the support for the truce, El Salvador saw a 50% reduction in homicides immediately. Over 4,000 lives have been saved since last March.

Our brothers in Pelican Bay sent out a call to cease hostilities. It needs to be supported! Instead it is being crushed, demonized by the department of “corrections.” Neither Beard [the head of CDCR] nor the legislators are backing the solutions arrived at by those who used to be part of the problem.

This is what we need to support. First we need to get them out of solitary confinement to be able to voice their new message of peace and hope. They need to stop being tortured behind those walls! We need them to send the message out into our communities. We need them to take part in intervention, prevention and re-entry programs.

No more prisons! No more solitary confinement! We need to support our brothers in Pelican Bay in their mission: to be a part of the solution. We need peace, not more violence, not more torture, not more mass incarceration. We need to end solitary confinement and invest in peace!

oners fighting amongst each other. Those in power promote mass warehousing to justify more guards, more tax dollars for “security,” and spend mere pennies for rehabilitation—all of which demonstrates a failed penal system, high recidivism, and ultimately compromising public safety. The State of California’s \$9.1 billion annual California Department of Corrections and Re-

habilitation (CDCR) budget is the epitome of a failed and fraudulent state agency that diabolically and systemically deprives thousands of their human rights and dignity. Allowing this agency to act with impunity has to stop! And it will....

The fact is that Gov. Brown and CDCR Secretary Beard have responded to our third peaceful action with typical denials and falsehoods, claiming solitary confinement does not exist and justifying the continuation

of their indefinite torture regime by vilifying the peaceful protest representatives. They also obtained the support of the medical receiver (Kelso) and Prison Law Office attorney (Spector—who is supposed to represent prisoners’ interests, and instead has become an agent for the state) to perpetuate their lie to the public and to the federal court—that prisoners participating in the hunger strike have been coerced—in order to obtain the Aug. 19 force-feeding order....

We urge people to remember that we began our present resistance with our unprecedented collective and peaceful actions (in tandem with the legislative process) back in early 2010, when we created and distributed a “Formal Complaint” for the purpose of educating the public and bringing widespread attention to our torturous conditions.

After much dialogue and consideration, this led us to our first and second hunger strike actions in 2011, during which a combined number of 6,500 and 12,000 prisoners participated. We succeeded in gaining worldwide attention and support resulting in some minor

Maroon the Implacable

Maroon the Implacable: The Collected Writings of Russell Maroon Shoatz (PM Press, 2013).

Pelican Bay State Prison, Calif.—These essays are written by a revolutionary theorist forced to endure the psychological and physical torture of solitary confinement for the past 40 years. It is a prison within a prison, designed to create an environment of total sensory deprivation with the intent to destroy a person.

How could a person having to endure that kind of dehumanizing treatment for 40 years survive and, most of all, retain their mental capacity? Within the pages of this book one comes face to face with an intrepid spirit of a human being who has a largeness of heart embracing the whole of humanity.

Maroon sets forth cogent perspectives to which serious freedom fighters should give ample consideration.

THE DRAGON AND THE HYDRA

For example in the essay “The Dragon and the Hydra: A historical study of organizational methods,” Maroon contrasts centralization and decentralization. By drawing on the legacy of fugitive slaves, who established self-sustaining and prosperous communities hidden and defensively protected, Maroon presents a vivid picture of the centralized communities’ critical flaws that later led to a compromise with their former colonial enslavers. That may or may not have been due to the self-serving interests of a few at the top, who failed to have a deeper view of what was truly at stake. The critical flaws in those centralized communities didn’t seem to appear in the decentralized communities. A decentralized social structure didn’t allow for one or two figures to rise to a position where they could assert a self-serving short-term interest.

One reasonably assumes that within the innate nature of decentralized organizational structure is a fundamental principle: that the freedom of one is the basis of freedom for all. This kind of principle caused the Hydra or decentralized communities to never separate their freedom from those slaves still held in bondage.

The decentralized communities demonstrate a strong propensity to not compromise their freedom for minimal gains. Those communities sought to continuously assert their human right of self-determination in which their productive forces could be freely unleashed.

Maroon’s analysis of the Dragon and the Hydra relates to our present-day dilemma of vanguardism vis-à-vis horizontal formations. The methodological structure of democratic centralism renders the theory of the party-to-lead an impractical tool for moving us

continued on p. 9

changes by the CDCR....

In early July, CDCR produced several memos notifying prisoners of an increase in privileges and property items, which are notably responsive to a few of our demands, while the majority of our demands were unresolved, leading to our third hunger strike, in which 30,000 prisoners participated and resulted in greater worldwide exposure, support and condemnation of CDCR!

From our perspective, we’ve gained a lot of positive ground towards achieving our goals. However, there’s still much to be done. Our resistance will continue to build and grow until we have won our human rights.

Respectfully, For the Prisoner Class Human Rights Movement: Todd Ashker, C58191, D1-119; Arturo Castellanos, C17275, D1-121; Sitawa Nantambu Jamaa (Dewberry), C35671, D1-117; Antonio Guillen, P81948, D2-106; And the Representatives Body: Danny Troxell, B76578, D1-120; George Franco, D46556, D4-217; Ronnie Yandell, V27927, D4-215; Paul Redd, B72683, D2-117; James Baridi Williamson, D-34288, D4-107; Alfred Sandoval, D61000, D4-214; Louis Powell, B59864, D1-104; Alex Yrigollen, H32421, D2-204; Gabriel Huerta, C80766, D3-222; Frank Clement, D07919, D3-116; Raymond Chavo Perez, K12922, D1-219; James Mario Perez, B48186, D3-124

[The full statement can be found at <http://prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com/2013/09/05/statement-suspending-the-third-hunger-strike/>—ed.]

EDITORIAL

continued from p. 1

discontinued food assistance under the federally funded WIC program, impacting over 50,000 women and children in North Carolina alone. Some Native Americans such as the Crow Tribe of Montana had to suspend health, nutrition and bus services. The same is true of many programs and shelters for victims of domestic violence and for welfare and pre-school programs.

All this, plus a \$24 billion bite out of the U.S. economy, was deemed acceptable in the quest to stop the scheduled implementation of President Obama’s 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA). How did ACA become the focal point of the Right’s populist rhetoric? Headlined by Sarah Palin and Texas Senator Ted Cruz, a Tea Party rally in the capitol wrapped this cause in calls for uncompromising revolt against the tyrants in power even as some of them brandished a Confederate flag outside the White House. ACA is a modest effort to extend healthcare access to nearly all citizens, which every other developed country—and many not so developed—accomplish much more cheaply and effectively. ACA was based on Republican-inspired methods implemented by Mitt Romney as Governor of Massachusetts.

RACIST TEA PARTY REIGN

None of those facts matter to the Tea Party fanatics who subjected the government to extortion and were called a purely nihilistic opposition even by some conservative pundits. What matters more is that this formerly Republican idea was implemented by an African-American President. Waving a Confederate flag at Obama was a perfect symbol for the 40 core pro-shutdown House members from lily-white districts, mostly in the South. Their anti-government rhetoric is shot through with veiled and not-so-veiled racist themes.

Moreover, this crisis had been planned for months by conservative activists in the Heritage Foundation, the Tea Party and their big business financiers like the billionaire Koch brothers. The Koch business group, Freedom Partners Chamber of Commerce, has spent hundreds of millions of dollars since 2012 trying to block ACA and promote candidates both locally and nationally who adhere strictly to the anti-ACA program.

Tea Party hatred of government is selectively aimed at help for the most vulnerable. For example, ACA medical care expansion would include the working poor.

The Republican Party is deeply fractured because many capitalists who support the repeal of ACA wonder if the Tea Party lunatics actually realize that default is a weapon that must never be fired because U.S. debt obligations are the crucial vehicle for global capitalists to bank their assets. They know that the government is an irreplaceable guarantor for finance capital. When things go badly, a bailout, or what Karl Marx called “capitalist communism,” will rescue them with infinite largesse as it did in 2008.

Even after their abject defeat at the hands of Obama and the Senate, Tea Party politicians are reveling in their show of force, hoping to use it to solidify the far Right’s sway over the Republican Party. They dream of purifying the Party by pushing aside “traitors” like Speaker Boehner, though he cravenly let them have the driver’s seat until the last minute.

Those who exploit racism in order to drag us ever closer to fascism are not just going to give up. And, despite this foray’s failure, they are still of use to the capitalists precisely because the system’s crisis runs so deep that revolt is ever brewing. The rulers aim to deceive, divide and suppress the working class and all forces of revolution. It is capitalism itself that is breeding crisis and fascism and must be abolished.

Catch-22 for prisoner with disabilities

Woodville, Texas—I find myself in the Texas prisons doing a ten-year sentence. I had polio in both legs and I'm being housed in the Administrative Segregation Unit. The only way to get out of Ad-Seg and back to the General Population (GP) is by attending the GRAD (Gang Renouncement and Dissociation Process). I have signed up for this program since December 2007. There is a two-year waiting period before being allowed to attend. Being federally funded, this program is not supposed to discriminate in any way against handicapped offenders.

After the two-year period, I started sending requests to the Security Threat Group Sergeant to find out when I will be taken to attend the program.

After many months of filing requests and grievances for their refusal to respond, I was told that I could not attend this program because the two units where it takes place do not house inmates with wheelchairs and don't have cells or showers for the handicapped.

This discrimination has been going on since way before I even signed up. But because of fear of retaliation by the prison staff, handicapped inmates have refused to speak out and are forced to do flat time in Ad-Seg.

I was approved to attend GRAD since May 2012. On June 17, 2013, I received notice that I was being removed from the list to attend due to being a wheelchair offender.

I filed two civil complaints against the prison system and the program director, accusing them of violating my civil rights and the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act. Being indigent, I filed these complaints *pro se*, meaning I would have to advocate for myself rather than having a lawyer. It's very hard because of my poor knowledge of the law.

In return for my complaints, I have received threats by sergeants and guards. I have had my things taken and been given false write-ups. This, I believe, is the main reason why other handicapped prisoners refused to speak out against this violation of our civil rights. I believe that even my incoming mail is being held back.

I've written to a lot of people who may help, but being *pro se*, a lot of lawyers won't handle this case. The Texas Civil Rights Project is well informed of this discrimination, but doesn't have the time to help, or that is what prisoner rights lawyer Michael Smith stated in a letter: "They help only less than 1% of all requests."

I don't know how *News & Letters* can help: you're even in a different state, but the discrimination against handicapped offenders is very real in the prison system.

Being in Ad-Seg, there is no parole, there is no hope for a GED education, there is no hope for being allowed to attend church, no hope to make collect calls to family members. Mainly, there is no other way to get out of Ad-

Seg and be released to the general population. Maybe by printing this letter, it will show the way taxpayer money is used to discriminate against the handicapped.

—Arturo Garza



by Suzanne Rose

A disabled man won a landmark legal ruling against a bus company in Leeds, England. Doug Paulley took First Bus Group to court after he was told he could not get on a bus because a stroller user refused to give up the space. The person with the stroller said that their baby was sleeping and they did not want to wake it by moving. Mr. Paulley was awarded \$8,844 and the bus company given six months to change its policy. The bus driver should have made the person with the stroller move, said Mr. Paulley. The court agreed with him.

* * *

Not satisfied that her son's educational needs were being met in the classroom, Deanna Lesneski tied herself to a lawn chair chained to the flagpole in front of her son's elementary school in Washington County, Penn., where she sat for three weeks. Finally, after a four-hour meeting with 20 state and school officials and the aide who will start to work with her son right away, she untied her chair. Her seven-year-old son, Max, has Down syndrome and asthma. He uses sign language to communicate. The previous agreement she had with the school system wasn't being implemented. Disability rights activists from the local area and surrounding states worked in shifts to keep Lesneski company.

* * *

A court in Moscow, Russia, sent out a broad and uncompromising message several weeks ago: Russian authorities will not tolerate protest from anyone. A Moscow court ordered a 38-year-old disabled man confined to indefinite psychiatric treatment. Mikhail Kosenko was found guilty of rioting and assaulting police at a May 6, 2012, demonstration on the eve of Vladimir Putin's inauguration as president. Kosenko was taken out of his apartment by eight police officers on June 6, 2013, and has been in jail ever since, denied bail. Kosenko had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and is on medication. None of the witnesses to the incident saw Kosenko assaulting anyone or disobeying police, as he is accused.

* * *

People who use wheelchairs are demanding the city of Montreal, Quebec, respect their right to vote on election day. About 40 people stormed into a city council meeting to demand the city make sure they are able to vote. Linda Gauthier was one. She says that many polling places are not accessible. "They just want us to stay home and vote—but we want to be able to go to a polling place too, like everyone else. We went to the moon. I think they could build ramps," said Gauthier.

No to Monsanto!



Angela Callicut

Protesters in Nashville, Tenn., in one of the 400 demonstrations of the second Global March against Monsanto on Oct. 12. Protests were held in 52 countries on all inhabited continents. They were calling for the permanent boycott of genetically modified organisms and harmful agro-chemicals.

Maroon the Implacable

continued from p. 8

towards freedom. Our future is at stake.

Maroon states that he was helped in developing his conclusions on the theory of anti-vanguardism by the Marxist C.L.R. James, who also developed the idea of state-capitalism along with Raya Dunayevskaya. What was then known as the Johnson-Forest Tendency emerged from within the Trotskyist Movement in the USA during the 1940s until its break up in 1955. The Tendency was led by Johnson (James), Forest (Dunayevskaya), and Hauser (Grace Lee Boggs). It is through reading Dunayevskaya's brilliant writings that this writer came to share the view of the flawed nature of vanguardism.

Maroon leaves no stone unturned in his effort to get us to re-examine our historical legacy bequeathed to us by African slaves who took sole responsibility for their freedom. An essential part of that legacy is the Underground Railroad.

Maroon's two points inform our thinking today as we struggle to develop a path forward. "1) [The Underground Railroad's] defiance of the government and popular sentiments; and 2) why it was one of the main causes of the Civil War and the emancipation of enslaved Blacks." Maroon concludes this chapter by saying, "the author challenges readers to more closely study the resistance to slavery in North America, then look in the mirror and ask yourself: just where do you fit in the historical drama? How do you measure up to the generations described here, which had so much effect on events that today's oppressors try very hard to keep the *real* accomplishments hidden?"

WOMEN'S LIBERATION AND HUMAN FREEDOM

Maroon's purpose for these essays is to get us to think in non-superficial terms, to vastly stretch our imaginations, elevate our minds, while reaching for deeper and richer levels of cognition. Nowhere is that purpose revealed more poignantly than in the chapter "Respect Our Mothers." Maroon uses the analogy from the movie "The Matrix"—Morpheus telling Neo how deep the rabbit hole is as indicative of what it is going to take to destroy the matrix.

That particular point mirrors Marx's contention that if we are to construct a new society from the ashes of the destruction of capitalist social relations, then it has to begin with what is most fundamental, the man/woman relationship. Marx predates the Women's Liberation Movement. Nonetheless, Marx was a clear proponent of the rights of women (consult Raya Dunayevskaya's 1982 *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*).

The critical engagement with writings of two feminists, Maria Mies and Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, enabled Maroon's conception of women in general and women as principal actors in humanity's liberatory struggle in particular. Maroon is more than hinting at the need to make a category of women's revolutionary participation. There is a union between Maroon's position and that of Raya Dunayevskaya when she singled out women as reason and force for the transformation of oppressive capitalist society.

Reading *Maroon The Implacable* is an inspirational and worthwhile experience. What comes through is how a raging fire, fully deprived, can still burn bright and simultaneously light a path toward a possible escape. The escape has a much more profound meaning because it isn't just about running off into the night, to hopefully never be seen again. No! It is not about running from, but running to—freedom.

—Faruq

Solidarity with Guantanamo hunger strikers

London, England—Some found it strange that a man voluntarily stopped eating for over 20 days. I found it hard. After all, I like to eat as much as anyone else. Yet my decision to go on hunger strike in support of Guantanamo Bay prisoners had a deeper, political meaning.

I was in good company. The usually cynically unflappable Scottish comedian, Frankie Boyle, had undertaken his own weeklong strike in July, having taken over from fellow striker Clive Stafford Smith, the founder of the legal aid charity Reprieve.

Clive triggered off something of a hunger strike domino effect. Having utilized social networking outlets, he implored others to make similar gestures of solidarity. He was soon joined by a diverse bunch, from human rights activists such as independent writer Carol Anne Grayson, to medical professionals such as David Nicholl, a consultant neurologist at City Hospital, Birmingham, UK.

What caused these disparate individuals to undertake such drastic action? The hunger strike initiated by nearly three quarters of the 166 Guantanamo Bay inmates last March provides an answer. Denied any real opportunity to present their case to courts or media, prisoners rebelled against what they perceived as a final insult: the searching of their Korans, allegedly for safety reasons, by guards seemingly wishing to further erode detainees' morale.

Fasting prisoners were subjected to intensely painful forced feeding methods. Yasiin Bey, perhaps better known as Mos Def, teamed up with Reprieve over the summer to expose just what was involved in the force-feeding process.

Bey, who was dressed in orange prisoner fatigues and restrained to a chair, had a meter of rubber tubing forced into his nose, down his throat into the stomach. In a video posted on the website of the UK national paper, *The Guardian*, Bey is seen to suffer extreme discomfort, eventually begging for the procedure to stop before breaking down in tears.

Yet why did I join with the wave of solidarity strikes, and opt for such an extreme method to demonstrate opposition to U.S. policy? It certainly isn't because I enjoy going hungry, or that I'm seeking to

gain attention; indeed, over the course of the strike and for some time after I had trouble communicating and found the prospect of speaking to anyone I didn't know incredibly unsettling. Why go through that?

Legally speaking, we should all be worried when fundamental human rights, in particular those relating to due process, can be set aside over a total distortion of international law. The norms of international humanitarian law (IHL)—or the law of armed conflict—place great emphasis on mitigating hardships caused by armed actions between rival nation states.

However, in the conflict in Afghanistan, the U.S. government overlooks IHL in dealing with enemy combatants as criminals ineligible for prisoner of war status. The basis of this argument is the fact that the Afghan insurgents no longer find themselves in the employ of a recognized state body, originally encapsulated as the Taliban regime. As such they cannot be considered a legitimate armed force when it comes to ascertaining their rights upon capture. The conflict, so the logic goes, is no longer an international confrontation between states, but an internal confrontation between a terrorist insurgency and a beleaguered government the U.S. seeks to support.

This argument runs into several problems. The U.S. has repeatedly referred to its campaign against Al-Qaeda as a "war on terror" and has deployed its armed forces multiple times, against state and non-state actors. The question of whether this "war on terror" is an armed conflict, between one state and another or between a state and insurgency, appears suitably answered by the U.S. government's actions and its long-standing belligerent rhetoric. As such, attempts to pick and choose from IHL seem ill advised.

What's more, the two additional 1977 protocols to the Geneva Conventions have shed light on issues relating to internal armed conflicts specifically, including the treatment of civilians and armed insurgents. The U.S.'s effective kidnapping of multiple inmates now held at Guantanamo puts it on the wrong side of such codifications, a fact hardly refuted by the allegedly non-international nature of the Afghanistan theatre.

—Dan Read

(Continued in the next issue)

Syrian Revolution tests world politics

continued from p. 1

to Assad’s genocidal attacks on the peaceful mass movement, has had to function under an effective arms embargo by the U.S. and other states. Asked by filmmaker Ben Allison-Davies what help was received from outside, a Free Syrian Army fighter said: “They just provide us with humanitarian aid. They haven’t given us any kind of weapons. If we don’t get heavy weapons (anti-tank, anti-aircraft) this war will take a long time, a very long time.”

The best elements of the FSA and armed opposition have maintained their relationship to the mass movement as a force for self-defense and self-liberation. Recent conflicts between the FSA and the forces of the al-Qaeda affiliate, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, may help to clarify that relationship. As people are learning, one of the biggest lies is the saying that “one man’s freedom fighter is another man’s terrorist.” There is a fundamental distinction.

‘THE REGIME AND AL-QAEDA ARE ONE!’

The fundamentalists have clearly become an expression of counter-revolution, as much as Assad himself, if far less powerful. Their oppressive interpretations of Islamic law, attacks on demonstrators and sectarian massacres are serving to alienate them from the Revolution, to the point where many are chanting “One, one, one; the regime and al-Qaeda are one!” Women have been active in opposing these forces.

One FSA fighter from Aleppo shared his thoughts on why the fundamentalists would lose: “Why did Christian faith decline in Europe? Because of the clergy’s medieval obscurantism and extremism, their wars against science and reason. What is destroying Islamic faith? Clerics of all sects who monopolize the word of God and Law, and in their obscurantism are fighting reason, freedom, science and progress—bin Laden and al-Qaradawi, Nasrallah and Khamenei, and al-Baghdadi.”

Al-Baghdadi is the head of the ISIL, which has often come into open conflict with the FSA. Far from carrying on a revolutionary struggle, the group’s campaign in Syria has come to mirror its terrorist campaign in Iraq. It is only geared toward seizing territory for its own purposes, and can only do so because so many are displaced from their homes and vulnerable. As in Afghanistan after the 1980s war, as in Somalia or Mali, al-Qaeda would like to function as an occupying army.

Residents of Raqqa, for example, have been resisting ISIL oppression by continuing the revolution, including through anti-sectarianism: when a cross was pulled down from a church, demonstrators lifted it back into place. Youth have openly published calls for love and brotherhood among all religious and ethnic groups.

The kidnap and torture of Rami al Razzouk, a member of the ANA New Media Association network, brought forth the following statement: “We condemn the oppression committed on our members who are dedicated to openly conveying the events on the ground. ANA refuses to stop its operation in Raqqa and vows to continue broadcasting whether with ISIL approval or not. Our revolution was one for freedom and democracy and freedom of expression. Free media is the only way forward for our country. Any party that stands to oppose us will not intimidate us or prevent us from making our voices known.”

COUNTER-REVOLUTION WITHIN REVOLUTION

This struggle against counter-revolution arising within the revolution is part of a challenge to the religious fundamentalism that arose as a world stage of reaction in the 1980s. It is one of the most profound outgrowths of the Arab Spring. Similar struggles are ongoing in Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Turkey and Iran. The Iranian people’s rejection of its own rulers has led Ayatollah Khamenei and newly elected President Rouhani toward negotiations with the U.S. As with the Egyptian military coup, this is an attempt to head off a more radical mass movement.

These struggles are not separate from that of the Black and Latino masses, women, and workers here in the U.S. against the Tea Party reactionaries and obscurantists. It is a worldwide movement.

The Syrian Revolution, from the beginning, has been world-historic. All powers have had to respond to it, and all revolutionaries have had to do the same.

FAILURES OF THE ‘LEFT’

At the moment that it seemed like the U.S. might actually launch some extremely limited strike on Assad’s forces, there was a rush by many “peace” activists to scream “Hands off Syria!” without acknowledging that the Syrian people are fighting a revolution

against a genocidal fascist state. Such one-dimensional politics have deadly consequences.

In Chicago, a Syrian government-aligned organization led a demonstration with a banner saying, “There are no peaceful demonstrators in the streets of Syria only insurgents.” Even some Leftists who profess to support the Syrian Revolution fell in line behind this vile lie, this apology for genocide.

At its worst, this attitude led some to align with the Tea Party and other reactionaries as if the radical Right was an anti-war option, rather than the seed of future genocidal imperialist world wars. It has also led some to echo old racist ideas: the rebels are cannibals! If the majority gets power, it will massacre the ruling minority! We’ve heard all this before.

Failure to understand the fundamental hostility of imperialism toward revolution indicates a failure to understand the nature of reality. “Revolutionaries” who take this path will become reactionary misleaders of future generations.

NECESSITY FOR SOLIDARITY

The shadow dances of reactionary state powers—most recently seen as the refusal of the Saudi rulers to take a seat on the UN Security Council, which has nothing to do with Syria and much to do with rival Iran—and the failure of so much of the Left can’t be the ground for revolutionaries now.

As a young Syrian woman pointed out, “What we have found out is that it’s only people-to-people, grassroots support that we have been able to rely on. That is where the food for the refugees, the medical care for the wounded has come from—from doctors who see what’s happening and volunteer; people who see the need and give of themselves.”

This is the concrete expression of a hard universal truth. Revolution will only come through the creation of new human relations. Those who can’t see the dead of Ghouta, who can’t hear the insistent voices of Syrian freedom fighters, will have nothing to contribute to the creation of a new, human society.

Marxist-Humanists stand in solidarity with and support of the freedom struggle in Syria. We see this revolutionary moment as the test of world politics, which could very likely determine the next stage of history.

Cultural critic Albert Murray (1916-2013)

Albert Murray was hardly the most famous intellectual in the U.S. but he was a great cultural critic, and it is possible that no other lived to see his ideas triumph so thoroughly. In his ground breaking works *The Omni-Americans* (1970) and *Stomping the Blues* (1976) Murray set out a vision of the African American as the representative “American,” of Black freedom as the soul of this nation’s culture.

As he put it, “The United States is in actuality not a nation of black people and white people. It is a nation of multicolored people. There are white Americans so to speak and black Americans. But any fool can see that the white people are not really white and that black people are not black. They are all interrelated one way or another.” He saw the blues as the classic expression of this.

From the rise of R&B and hip-hop as dominant forms of popular music, to the election of the first Black U.S. President, Murray has proven to be prophetic. But his ideas also embody the fundamental contradictions of U.S. society.

John Alan, writing in *News & Letters* in 1972, pointed this out: “Murray can only imagine fundamental revolutionary changes, not at the bottom with the so-called masses, but at the very top.” It isn’t that Murray either dismissed or romanticized the Black masses, but rather that by keeping to the level of culture, he avoided dealing with the revolutionary essence of our history.

Murray passed away on Aug. 18, just before the Tea Party shut down the government in its openly racist opposition to the first Black president’s Republican Party-inspired healthcare plan. That event was one more battle in the long civil war that has turned around the axis of American identity Murray so clearly identified.

—Tim Finnegan



Demonstration in Chicago, Aug. 24, 2013, shortly after Assad used sarin gas on civilians killing over a thousand.

Shackdwellers protest

continued from p. 1

4:20 AM. The police were about five meters from the protestors. One police officer shot Nqobile as she was running away.

That police officer was the Cato Manor Station commissioner. He came without his police uniform and was seen drawing his gun and shooting at Nqobile. Nqobile and Luleka were shot from behind while running away from the police. Their wounds clearly show that they were shot from behind.

LIES TOLD TO JUSTIFY MURDER

Neither Nqobile nor Luleka or anyone else fired shots at the police. None of the protestors were armed. It is a lie that is being told to justify murder, cold-blooded murder, political murder—the third political murder in Cato Crest this year.

At around 9:00 AM Bandile Mdalose participated in a march to the Cato Manor police station to protest against the killing. At this time people also pulled branches and tires into the road and set them alight. There was no violence from the protestors. The television footage shows Bandile pointing at the police and asking them why they had been shooting people.

The police dispersed that march with water cannons and rubber bullets. People fled into the shacks with the police chasing them and shooting them as they tried to hide. After they had broken up the march Bandile was arrested while standing on the pavement.

The story that the police have told about the murder of Nqobile is as much a lie as the story that they told after the Marikana Massacre (see Sept.-Oct. 2012 *News & Letters*, “South Africa Marikana mine massacre”). It is as much a lie as the story that they told after we were attacked by the ANC in Kennedy Road in 2009. It is as much a lie as the lies that they told after our peaceful marches were attacked in 2005 and 2007.

One young woman is dead. Another has been shot and is injured and another is in jail, denied bail. The police say that they were “terrified”—of three young women, none of whom was armed, while the police had heavy weapons?

The police say that they are upholding “law and order” and the Constitution but no one is under arrest for the murder of three activists in Cato Crest since

March, the injuring of two activists by shooting, the many death threats from the ANC and all the illegal evictions, which have often been accompanied by violence.

The police were waiting for our members on Monday morning and they shot us without warning or provocation. They shot to kill. They shot us because we were gathering in the space of the middle classes, the space that used to be for the whites and is now for the rich. We are the ones that are supposed to be moved to the human dumping grounds in the middle of nowhere.

HEROINES OF CATO MANOR 1959

Some of our members grew up with the story of the women’s struggle in Cato Manor in 1959. We have members whose mothers were part of that struggle. Cato Crest is part of Cato Manor of Umkhumbane. The ANC tells us that the women who led the struggle in Cato Manor in 1959, Florence Mkhize and Dorothy Nyembe, are heroes. But, when Abahlali women demand land and housing, safety and dignity, they are criminals.

We are sure that the apartheid state called Florence Mkhize and Dorothy Nyembe criminals too. But they lived as heroes in the hearts of the people just as Nqobile, Luleka and Bandile live in our hearts as heroes.

We see a clear connection between the heroes of 1959 and the heroes of today. We also see a clear connection between the white Boers of 1959 and the Black Boers of 2013. The struggle continues. The struggle for Umkhumbane continues. The women’s struggle in Umkhumbane continues. The struggle to make sure that land, cities, wealth and power are shared fairly continues.

—Excerpted from Abahlali baseMjondolo

NEWS & LETTERS

VOL.58/NO. 6

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2013

News & Letters (ISSN 0028-8969) is published bi-monthly. Subscriptions are \$5 a year (bulk order of 5 or more, 25c each) from News & Letters, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Telephone 312-431-8242. Fax 312-431-8252. Periodical postage paid at Chicago, Illinois. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to News & Letters, 228 South Wabash, #230, Chicago, IL 60604. Articles may be reprinted verbatim if credited to “News & Letters.”

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News & Letters is printed in a union shop.

News & Letters is indexed by Alternative Press Index.

TRADE UNION COUNCIL

CHICAGO, IL

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Movements confront climate change

Occupations of planned fracking sites in Canada and Romania showed the intensification of struggles against the damage fossil fuel exploitation is inflicting. Protests swept across Canada in late October in solidarity with the Elsipogtog Mi'kmaq First Nation's battle to prevent fracking (hydraulic fracturing to extract natural gas) near their land. (See p. 12.) The protests were sparked by a national police assault on the weeks-old protest camp in Rexton, New Brunswick, that was so violent it provoked burning of police cars.

Meanwhile, Global Frackdown day, Oct. 19, saw 250 anti-fracking protests in over 25 countries. Most dramatically, 800 protesters rallied in Pungesti, Romania, where a blockade by villagers had already forced Chevron to suspend a fracking project.

The urgency of stopping the headlong rush to extract and burn fossil fuel was underscored by the latest comprehensive report from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN's scientific body on global warming. Filtered through representatives of national governments, IPCC's reports are typically conservative, yet they show that human activity is causing global warming with very dangerous consequences.

LEAVE THE FUEL IN THE GROUND

What is new in the report is the point—previously made by the climate justice movement and by a few outspoken climate scientists like James Hansen—that if the world is to have any chance to keep global warming manageable, then humanity's future emissions of greenhouse gases must be less than what it has already generated in the past 250 years of capitalist industrialization. In short, we have to leave the vast majority of fossil fuels in the ground.

In reality, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. Some of the world's most powerful corporations and some of the biggest national economies rely on fossil fuel extraction—which explains the heated debate before the IPCC report's release, when Saudi Arabia, China and Brazil tried to undermine this "carbon budget" point. It also explains why the far-right Koch brothers and other fossil fuel titans have worked so hard to discredit the IPCC and the 97% of climate scientists who agree with its main conclusions.

PROFIT OVER SETTLED SCIENCE

Even before the IPCC report summary was issued, Koch-funded climate denial groups were attacking it. While Fox News ranted about a supposed cover-up, most corporate media just pretended there was a controversy with two equal sides, instead of settled science opposed by a profit-driven propaganda machine.

Those attacks were only the most visible expression of vast capitalist resistance to action with regard to climate change. Spearheaded by oil, coal and natural gas companies, this resistance has blocked any binding national or international commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions anywhere near as sharply as is needed for the future of human civilization.

In response, climate justice movements have identified those very industries as the enemy, and youth in those movements increasingly state that capitalism it-

Stop Detroit evictions

Detroit—Detroit Eviction Defense is fighting to keep Jerome Jackson in his home in Inkster, Mich. Jackson has been a leading fighter in Detroit Eviction Defense, active in many campaigns to keep others in their homes. We fight with the Hernandez and Orozco families in Southwest Detroit fighting Fannie Mae and its out-of-control efforts to throw families from their homes and cause further damage to our neighborhoods. Resistance is growing; join us! We demand no more foreclosures, no more evictions and good housing for all.

Fannie Mae (the Federal National Mortgage Association), the giant underwriter of the U.S. mortgage industry, is doing more than 70% of the country's foreclosures and evictions. Fannie Mae, the banks and the government have forced millions from their homes, while guaranteeing the obscene profits of the banks and the financial services industry.

We say "NO MORE/NO MAS!"

Jerome Jackson purchased his home in Inkster in 2004 as part of a nationwide Fannie Mae program targeting people with disabilities for predatory loans. Fannie Mae, HUD, the State of Michigan, Wayne County and Community Living Services convinced Jackson—and many other people with disabilities including Jerome's friend and neighbor Donald Moore—to buy a home on the promise that the government would provide ongoing housing assistance so they could afford the mortgage payments. Jackson did his part, paying his portion of the mortgage each month.

He worked to make his home wheelchair accessible, fighting for entrance ramps, front and back, wider doors and a lift to the basement. He has lived in his home with independence and dignity for ten years. Now Fannie Mae and the government have pulled the plug, stopping housing assistance and moving to evict him.

Detroit Eviction Defense meets Thursdays at 6 PM at St. John's Church, 2120 Russell St. (www.detroit-evictiondefense.org)

—Miriam Pickens

self must be overcome if we are to halt its environmentally and socially destructive momentum—although some leading movement figures, including climatologists like Hansen, are unable to let go of the fatal illusion that there is no alternative to capitalism.

The frontlines of battle today are at points of extraction, like the blockaded fracking sites; at lines of fossil fuel transport, like the Keystone XL pipeline and other means of releasing Canada's tar sands oil onto the world market; and at points of use, such as coal-fired power plants. Several coal-fired plants have been shut down in the U.S., due partly to economics, but also to the movement which has prevented state-capitalist rescue of fiscally failing plants.

Struggles against capitalist exploitation of nature are also struggles against capitalist exploitation of labor; the whole rotten system needs to go. Ecologically sound practices can only be built on new human relations.

—Franklin Dmitryev

Oakland Frackdown



Oakland, Cal.—About 90 members of environmental and community groups gathered at Frank Ogawa Plaza for "Oakland Frackdown" on Oct. 19 to protest passage of State Senate Bill 4 authorizing hydraulic fracturing in California. Led by a giant condor puppet, marchers to the State Building carried signs and a 50-foot scroll listing scores of chemicals used in fracking.

Supporters, some of them so-called progressive legislators, argue that fracking has been going on in the state for 50 years and now will finally be regulated. Actually the new law requires state approval of all fracking permits in California for the next two years provided the companies disclose to regulators the chemicals used in the process.

—Marcher

QUEERNOTES

by Elise

A bill to require removal of children in Russia from GLBT parents was recently withdrawn, but just for rewording. Russia already bans adoption of children to parents in countries where same-sex marriage is legal. Queer rights advocates were stopped by a mob from rallying on Coming Out Day. Still the International Olympic Committee gave its go-ahead for the Winter Olympics to take place in Sochi in 2014, saying Russia's ban on "propaganda" of nontraditional sexual relations to minors would not violate the Olympic Charter because Russia has promised to "promote social inclusion without discrimination of any kind" during the Olympics.

* * *

Since November 1, parents of Intersex children in Germany have the option of leaving the gender section of their children's birth certificates blank for their children to fill in later, or leave undesignated all their lives.

* * *

Former Victory Fellowship Church youth pastor Brent Giroux of Council Bluffs, Iowa, will not spend one day in prison for raping four boys, in his words, to cure them of homosexuality. The judge suspended Giroux's 17-year prison sentence and mandated only sex offender treatment and five years probation. Eight more youths have accused Giroux of rape.

* * *

In 1987 Iran's then-ruler Khomeini issued a fatwa in favor of transition surgery. The recommendation to anyone thinking they are Gay is to transition to the opposite gender. Iran ranks third among nations in transition surgery, offering government subsidies.

* * *

Eric Ohena Lembembe, who directed the Cameroonian Foundation for AIDS, was discovered in his home in mid-July tortured and murdered. Weeks earlier, the headquarters of Alternatives-Cameroun, AIDS services provider to the LGBTQ community, was burned down.

Youth again ready to storm the barricades

New York City—Whenever you go to demonstrations, whether it is fast food workers demanding a living wage and a union where they work, or immigrants demanding total legalization now instead of a phony 14-year "path to citizenship," or marches after the Trayvon Martin verdict, young people are playing a major role in the struggles for social justice and equal rights.

It was young people who defied the government and declared, "Yes, we are illegals, arrest us." It was the young "Dreamers" who occupied the Governor of Florida's office after the Trayvon Martin verdict. It was students at the City College of New York that protested when the architect of U.S. torture, David Petraeus, was given a teaching position there.

BLACK AND LATINO YOUTH TAKE THE LEAD

The Latino carwash workers who fought for a union and justice on the job were overwhelmingly young. At the protests against recent police murders of unarmed young people in New York, it has been young Black and Latino youth who have taken the lead. Even on the picket lines at Trade Fair markets there was a youthful spirit and presence.

Youth don't confine themselves to labor issues. The volunteers who got Word Up bookstore up and running were youth from the neighborhood, and Word Up breathes the spirit of youthful optimism.

Who can forget the powerful—and continuing—youthful passion of the Occupy movement? It was the young who took Zuccotti Plaza, who marched across the Brooklyn Bridge and who held the Park when Bloomberg threatened to evict them. When the word of the planned eviction came out, young people from all over New York raced to the park to fight for its survival.

YOUNG WOMEN FIGHT FANATICAL RIGHT

It is students who participated in fights against standardized testing in Seattle, New York, and New Jersey, and supported the Chicago teachers' strike. Women's organizations too are pushed to be more radical in fighting the Right by their young members. At a number of campuses there is resistance to the corporatization of education. Youth are on the move, proving themselves a force for revolution.

Even if the struggle seems to be just for higher wages or better working conditions, in truth young people are attacking the very idea that capital has a right to exploit them. They are, in every strike, march or rally, saying no to the American system. This is a revolutionary act.

For millions of young people, it is a question of life or death. Young mothers have had WIC benefits that help feed their babies cut or eliminated. High school dropouts and graduates alike cannot find work and are forced to join the military or deal drugs to survive. College graduates join the ranks of the unemployed, willing to do any job because they have tens of thousands of dollars in student loans to pay off.

Young immigrants live and work in constant fear of arrest, trial and deportation. Young women may have to travel hundreds of miles to get an abortion, because nearby clinics were shut down by a right-wing misogynist state government. All these and more live the reality of capitalism in the U.S.

Does it have to be this way? Revolutionaries say no, there is a better way: unite, and become part of the movement that has the power to fundamentally change the systems that now dominate the world. Become a revolutionary and dedicate your life to the revolutionary struggle. That is the task of our time.

—Michael Gilbert

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WORLD IN VIEW

by Gerry Emmett

On Oct. 17, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) attacked men and women of the Mi'kmaq and Elsipogtog First Nation for the “crime” of defending their recognized treaty rights. People, including elders, were beaten and pepper sprayed. The Mi'kmaq were blocking a New Brunswick highway in protest of South-western Energy doing seismic testing to determine whether local shale gas deposits merit drilling—which would be done by way of destructive fracking.

PEOPLE FIGHT BACK

In response to the RCMP's brutal assault, six police vehicles were torched. Forty protesters were arrested, some still in jail as of this writing. Opposition to the possibility of fracking has been building since 2010, when the government of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper opened up huge areas of the province to shale gas exploration.

This demonstration is part of a nationwide, and international, struggle by Indigenous people against exploitation and environmental degradation. Global warming makes it a fight for human survival. As Indigenous group Idle No More has stated: “The taking of resources has left many lands and waters poisoned—the



animals and plants are dying in many areas in Canada. We cannot live without the land and water. We have laws older than this colonial government about how to live with the land... We believe in healthy, just, equitable and sustainable communities and have a vision and plan of how to build them.”

In neighboring Nova Scotia, previous Canadian governments have recognized the right of the Mi'kmaq to be consulted on plans regarding the land, and for a decade have been negotiating a Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Consultation Process. This recognition, if only *in principle*, reveals the regressive nature of the latest actions.

CAPITAL'S 'ENEMY'

The Harper government regards First Nations people and climate scientists as its enemies. It has moved to gut

environmental protections, vilified all who dared to question the impact of tar sands drilling and pipeline construction, and pulled out of the Kyoto accords.

Harper is determined to wring every last drop of saleable oil and gas out of the Canadian earth. His power base, economic perspective, even his religious views, belong to the oil and gas industries. To this free market and Christian fundamentalist it makes no difference if the environment is ruined.

de Níquel (CGN). Hudbay has been involved in a land dispute with the Mayan community.

Rights Action, a group defending Indigenous people in Central America, reported that “security personnel—under the control of Hudbay—gang-raped 11 women, shot dead an Indigenous leader and outspoken critic of mining practices, and left another man paralyzed from the chest down after sustaining a gunshot wound.” This marks the first time that a Canadian court has agreed to accept a case brought by foreign people against a Canadian mining company.



Mexico—In Mexico City tens of thousands of teachers from around the country have camped and held daily protests, disrupting traffic and services. They are protesting the government of President Peña Nieto, which passed an “educational reform” law whose primary purpose is to control teachers. The government claims the law improves teacher standards by testing teachers’ competence. But it was rammed through Congress with no input from teachers.

In the poorest states, conditions—from the physical structure of schools, to lack of teaching materials and other resources—are abysmal. The response of a militant minority has created the most substantial teacher protests in decades. They have gone on for months, including a month-long strike at the beginning of the school year in many states. The federal government has refused to negotiate in any serious manner.

Many students in Mexico City support the teachers, and joined in their demonstrations. But the protests haven’t found the needed mass support from other sectors of society, particularly other unions—a legacy of corrupt, party-controlled unions. Where the movement will go now isn’t yet clear.

—Eugene Walker

What the brutality expressed in New Brunswick demonstrates is that the “free market” is based on the denial of freedom to live human beings.

This is the history of so-called primitive accumulation of capital as described by Karl Marx in *Capital*. The destruction of Indigenous societies was integral to it from the beginning. As Mi'kmaq Chief Alphonse Metallic put it following a previous episode of RCMP brutality over fishing rights, “Until Canada and the provinces recognize the aboriginal nations of North America, incidents of this nature will continue to happen.”

Anti-Roma racism

French high school students protested the dragging of a 15-year old student, Leonarda Dibrani, from a school bus by police. Dibrani, a Kosovar girl who is also Roma, was being expelled from the country along with her family. This was not an isolated incident. Racism against Roma infects significant sectors of French society, and now reaches into the innards of the “Socialist” government. Minister of the Interior Manuel Valls has said that “only a minority” of Roma could be integrated into society.

The Roma are a small minority in France, some 20,000, but they are subject to extreme isolation—many live in squalid camps on the outskirts of cities—accused of being petty criminals, and generally being an “Other.” The reality of Roma life is one of economic poverty, and lack of opportunity for jobs or education. The far Right refers to them as “smelly” and “rash-inducing,” which most French people condemn. But fear of the Other “invading” French society has a long history, particularly regarding North African and Middle Eastern immigrants.

France isn’t alone in its racism. England has broken up a Roma encampment and expelled its residents. The Czech Republic places Roma in segregated schools. Police in Sweden kept a special registry of Roma families. On the other hand, Spain has made efforts to welcome and integrate the Roma into society through healthcare, education, and social housing. This is in opposition to the anti-Roma actions of the Fascist era.

—E.W.

Terror at Kenyan mall

In a horrific attack on the upscale Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Somalia-based Islamist terrorist group al-Shabaab killed at least 68 men, women and children. The group claimed this atrocity was a reprisal for Kenyan troops being in Somalia.

In fact, this brutal, inhuman attack was an effort by al-Shabaab to assert its continuing relevance in light of major defeats by UN-backed African Union troops in Somalia. The group has also been weakened by internal splits and defections.

These internal tensions were highlighted by the recent assassination of a dissident American member, Omar Hammami, a prominent organizer, financier and propagandist who recently broke with al-Shabaab’s leaders.

Kenya is home to some of the world’s largest refugee camps, housing hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees. The logic behind al-Shabaab’s attack on Kenyan civilians is to increase tension and generate prejudice against these refugees and Kenya’s own Muslim population. It is a strategy of desperation.

—E.W., G.E.

NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

News & Letters was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcat strikes against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signaled a new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. *News & Letters* was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation.

Raya Dunayevskaya (1910–1987), founder of the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism, became Chairwoman of the

National Editorial Board and National Chairwoman of the Committees from its founding to 1987. Charles Denby (1907–83), a Black production worker, author of *Indignant Heart: A Black Worker’s Journal*, became editor of the paper from 1955 to 1983. Dunayevskaya’s works, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* (1958), *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* (1973), and *Rosa Luxemburg, Women’s Liberation, and Marx’s Philosophy of Revolution* (1982) spell out the philosophic ground of Marx’s Humanism internationally, as *American Civilization on Trial* concretizes it on the American scene and shows the two-way road between the U.S. and Africa.

This body of ideas challenges all those desiring freedom to transcend the limitations of post-Marx Marxism, beginning with Engels. In light of the crises of our nuclearly armed world, it becomes imperative not only to reject what is, but

to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery of Marx’s Marxism in its original form as a new Humanism and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as Marxist-Humanism. This is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*.

Dunayevskaya’s philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya’s original 1953 philosophic breakthrough

and her final 1987 Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

In opposing this capitalistic, racist, sexist, heterosexist, class-ridden society, we have organized ourselves into a committee form of organization rather than any elitist party “to lead.” We participate in all class and freedom struggles, nationally and internationally. As our *Constitution* states: “It is our aim...to promote the firmest unity among workers, Blacks and other minorities, women, youth and those intellectuals who have broken with the ruling bureaucracy of both capital and labor.” We do not separate mass activities from the activity of thinking. Send for a copy of the *Constitution* of News and Letters Committees.